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THE GOSPEL OF SÂDHU SUNDAR SINGH

THE GOSPEL OF SÂDHU SUNDAR SINGH

BY

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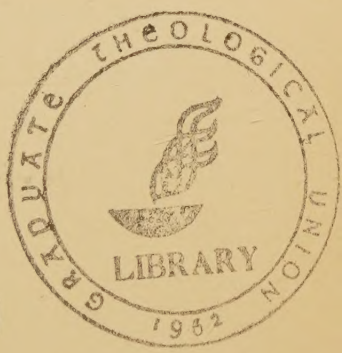
Abridged Translation

BY

OLIVE WYON



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"To listen to *my* voice will do you no good; you must hear His Voice. Go into stillness, then you will hear Him speaking, and you will understand what a man has found for himself who came to you from a heathen land: *Christ alone is salvation*. He who lives in Him becomes dead to sin and enters into eternal life."—*Sundar Singh in the Guildhall at Petersgraben at Basle*, March 20, 1922.

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE late Baron von Hügel, himself a man of saintly character, and also a sincere admirer of Sâdhu Sundar Singh, once said, in speaking of him : "The Roman Church has shown great wisdom in refusing to canonise any saints during their lifetime." These words are a salutary warning in so far as they apply to those Christians of Europe and America who have acclaimed the Sâdhu, in a quite extravagant way, as the great living Indian Saint. The excellent and useful books which have been written about Sundar Singh up to the present time have served rather to intensify the "Sâdhu cult" than to check it. In a somewhat one-sided way they have tended to lay too much stress upon the extraordinary and unusual element in his life and personality—the miraculous and ecstatic element—and in so doing they have allowed the essential and central element, his spiritual message, to recede into the background. The present writer has tried to seize upon and illuminate the objective and universal element in the Sâdhu's life : his spiritual message. My motto has been those golden words of the *Imitatio Christi* : "*Non quaere, quis hoc dixerit, sed quid dicatur, attende.*" Viewed from this angle, his exterior life takes a relatively small amount of space, and by far the larger part of the book deals with his spiritual message.

In spite of the deep and reverent admiration which I feel for the Sâdhu and the true and grateful friendship which binds me to him personally, I have never shirked

the duty of critical investigation. As a catholic-minded Christian, I have considered it my duty to test and examine the Sâdhu's message in the light of the faith of the Church Universal, by the sense of the corporate tradition of the whole of Christendom. Considered from this point of view, the Sâdhu's message certainly appears wonderfully uplifting, consoling, and strengthening ; at the same time, however, it betrays a certain one-sidedness and limitation of outlook which, although in no way diminishing the freshness and power of his personality, show that it cannot be applied as a general rule of life nor upheld as a universal example. But in spite of the subjective limitation of the Sâdhu's outlook, there is no doubt that he has a positive message for the Christians of Eastern and Western lands. Indians, Europeans, Christians and non-Christians, we can all learn from him, and for this reason we ought not to wait till we can view his life as a whole, but, while he is still with us, we ought to clarify our ideas about him, or rather about his message. Like Mahâtma Gândhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Sundar Singh has a mission to the present day ; and if we find it useful and significant to speak and write about the former, it can only do us good to concentrate our attention upon this eminent Indian Christian of the present day while he is yet alive.

The short account of his life contained in the present volume differs somewhat from the other books which have been written about the Sâdhu. This account is based upon information gathered by reliable eye-witnesses in India.

At the present time Sundar Singh is the object of heated controversy. Father Hosten, a Jesuit at Darjeeling, writing in *The Catholic Herald of India* (1923-1925), has tried to prove that the Sâdhu is a shameless

impostor, who has invented the greater part of his life-story in order to win the reputation of sanctity. German Jesuits published these accusations in the paper entitled *Stimmen der Zeit* (1924-1926), omitting, however, the charge of deliberate imposture ; rather they take the view that he is an " Oriental deceiver," a childish visionary, who confounds the creations of his fantasy with reality. The Jesuits have been supported by the Protestant pastor Dr. O. Pfister, who, in close collaboration with Father Hosten, has published a large book against the Sâdhu, which bears the significant title *The Legend of Sundar Singh* (Berne, 1926). Pfister regards the Sâdhu as a neurotic person whose sense of reality has been impaired, and who therefore tends, although unconscious that he is doing so, to misrepresent historical facts. He believes, too, that he has discovered other morbid traits, such as sadism, in the Sâdhu's psycho-physical life. From the point of view of a psycho-analyst, he believes that his love to Christ is rooted in repressed infantile sex-complexes.

I have examined with great care the accusations both of the Jesuits and of Pfister, and I have caused thorough inquiries to be made in India in all directions. The result has been most astonishing. I have been forced to modify my own critical attitude towards the miraculous element in the Sâdhu's life and to revise my theory of the legendary element. In spite of the fact that all the questions which have been raised have not yet been answered, it is exactly those narratives which were most difficult to accept (such as the story of the Mahârishi and the secret mission of the Sannyâsis) which have been most unexpectedly confirmed. Further, the very men who have known the Sâdhu most intimately for nearly twenty years are those who bear most clear and convincing testimony to his sincerity.

If the Sâdhu's opponents, who have often declaimed against him with polemical bitterness, have fastened on other points as well, that is because, blinded by their own theories, they have completely lost sight of the most elementary rules of historical criticism, and indeed they have even gone further than this. The Jesuits attack the Sâdhu fearing lest the fact of his sanctity should weaken the claim of the Roman Church to be the only home of saints ; Modernist Protestants, on the other hand, attack him because they fear that the Sâdhu's " miracles " may confirm the belief in the miracles of the Bible which they reject.[1] Sundar Singh bears all these accusations and attacks with the greatest calmness and joy, and only speaks of his opponents with love ; he is "full of the certainty that God will reveal the truth in His own time."

May it be granted to the English translation of this book to further the high enterprise of Christian Missions in the land of the Vedas. Above all, may it be received both by Christian and non-Christian India as a greeting of warm affection and as a sign that we Christians of Europe are ready and willing to receive with gratitude that enrichment of life which flows from the spiritual treasury of India.

MARBURG,
The Feast of St. Elizabeth,
November 19, 1926

[1] Cf. my reply to the Jesuits: *Apostel oder Betrüger?* Dokumente zum Sâdhustreit. München, Reinhardt, 1925; and also the volume which is appearing from the same house directed against Pfister, *Christuszeuge oder Hysteriker?* Neue Dokumente zum Sâdhustreit.

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INTRODUCTION

A STRANGE guest is standing before the door of an English house : a tall, upright figure in a long, saffron-coloured robe, with a large turban wound round his head. His olive complexion and his black beard proclaim his Indian birth ; his dark eyes, with their gentle expression, reveal a heart at rest, and they shine with an infinite kindness. The stranger gives his name to the girl who opens the door : Sâdhu Sundar Singh. The girl gazes at him for a moment in astonishment, then she hastens to call her mistress : " There is someone at the door who wishes to see you, ma'am ; I can't pronounce his name, but he looks like Jesus Christ ! " (1)

At a meeting in a certain town in America a three-year-old child was sitting in the front row. She was staring with all her might at the speaker—that mysterious man in the saffron robe. When the speaker had finished his address and had sat down, the little girl said in a clear, high voice, which rang through the hall : " Is he Jesus Christ ? " (2)

The English girl and the American child were not the only people who instantly perceived the sanctity and divine vocation of the Indian visitor who reminded them so much of our Lord. Many men and women, both in Asia and in Europe, who had the good fortune to see him felt as though he were a reincarnation of one of the great men of God from Bible days. " Wherever he goes you hear people saying : ' How like he is to Christ ! ' " writes Mrs. Parker, his friend and biographer. And Jean Fleury, a missionary among the Mahrattas,

says : " The man is a living sermon : I have never met anyone who helps you to see Christ as he does." Even the well-known American theologian, Frank Buchman, of the Hartford Theological Seminary, sums up his impression of the Sâdhu in these words : " He is more like Christ than anyone we have ever seen."

This intuitive impression is confirmed by all we learn of the life and teaching of this remarkable man. In the wonderful story of his life, and in his apostolic activity, this Indian Christian disciple resembles the great apostle of the Gentiles. Like Paul, Sundar Singh was converted in a wonderful manner by a vision of Christ; like him also, Sundar Singh was changed from a bitter enemy into a devoted disciple and apostle ; like Paul, again, he did not receive the Gospel from man, " but . . . through revelation of Jesus Christ " ; like him also, he has travelled over land and sea in order to bear witness to the grace and power of his Saviour ; like him, he has done and suffered all things for the sake of the Gospel ; like Paul, he can say literally :

" In labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft . . . in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers . . . in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness . . . in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." " In everything commending ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings . . . by evil report and good report."

The outward and inward resemblances which can be found between the lives of Paul and the Sâdhu are surprising. A Swiss minister says : " I believe that right down the centuries no one has been more like Paul than the Sâdhu, in his message, as well as in other ways, not only because he happens to be an Oriental, but because, like Paul, he is possessed by Christ to an unusual degree."

In many ways, however, Sundar Singh is still more like our Lord as He was upon earth. Like Jesus of Nazareth, he wandered homeless from village to village, from town to town ; like the Master, often "he had not where to lay his head." Like Him, he withdraws constantly into the solitude of the hills, where, far from his brethren, he spends hours in deep communion with the Eternal Father. Like Him, he proclaims the Gospel in simple language, which can be understood by all ; like Him, too, he is a master in the art of teaching through parables which help dull minds to catch something of the meaning of the heavenly mysteries. Like Him, he is full of love for children, and always " suffers the little ones " to come to him. He has left all to follow his Master—home, family, and possessions ; in order to serve Him completely he took quite literally the command : " Get you no gold nor silver in your purses ; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff." And as the instructions of Jesus were literally obeyed by him, so also the prophecy of Jesus has been literally fulfilled in his life : " Before governors and kings shall you be brought for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."

So in the life of Sundar Singh we see part of the Bible history being lived out before our eyes ; that life of the Saviour and of His apostle which to so many of our contemporaries seems either an incredible legend or an unattainable ideal has become once more concrete and actual in the life of this man of God. " At every turn," says the Swiss pastor already quoted, " the New Testament comes alive in all its varied wealth of inner and outer experience ; through him we see it among us in all its richness and wonder."

SÂDHU SUNDAR SINGH

Part I

THE ANCESTRAL FAITH OF SUNDAR SINGH

1. The History of the Sikh Religion

THIS Christian apostle of the present day, whose life is a veritable "Mirror of Christ," comes from that great country of religion—India. None of the other non-Christian lands possesses such a rich mine of religious wealth as the land of the Ganges and the Indus. From those far-off days when the holy *ṛṣi* received the inspiration which they embodied in the Vedic Hymns, the stream of religious life, gradually widening into many different channels, has flowed through the centuries right down to our own times. From the infinite variety of India's heritage of religion, which our scientific research has not yet been able fully to survey, some leading tendencies emerge : the rich ritualism and asceticism of Brahmanism, the deep mystical wisdom of the Vedânta, the artificial spiritual discipline of the Yoga, the profound doctrines of Buddhism, the glowing theocentric devotion of the *Bhakti*, and the consuming zeal of Islâm. These widely varying types mingle and cross each other again and again in the history of religion in India. One of its most remarkable combinations is the Sikh religion, the ancestral faith of Sundar Singh.(3)

The Sikh religion is a reformed faith which tried to achieve a higher synthesis between Hinduism and Islâm.

Its founder was Guru Nânak, who belongs to that group of great religious *Bhakti* of the Indian mediæval period with which we associate the names of Chaitanya, Nâm Dev and Kabîr ; the latter had already achieved a union of Hindu and Islâmic-Sûfî piety. Nânak was born in 1469 at Rayapur, near Lahore, in the Punjab, of wealthy parents ; very early in life he left the world, donned the saffron robe of an ascetic, and became a *fakîr*, a wandering saint, or, in the language of the Indian Middle Ages, a *sâdhu*. He sought salvation in all the existing religions and cults of his day, but without success.

"I have consulted the four Veds, but these writings find not God's limits. I have consulted the four books of the Mohammedans, but God's worth is not described in them. I have dwelt by rivers and streams, and bathed at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage ; I have lived among the forests and glades of the three worlds, and eaten bitter and sweet ; I have seen the seven nether regions, and heavens upon heavens. And I, Nânak, say : man shall be true to his faith if he fear God and do good works." [1]

This was the new truth which Nânak found after strenuous search, and which from that time forward he never tired of proclaiming everywhere. In order to preach this message he undertook long missionary journeys, to eastern India, Ceylon, Kashmir, and even to Mecca. This Sâdhu, who was both a mystic and a prophet, led a most varied life, full of wonderful events, and after his death his memory was adorned, like that of so many of his predecessors, with a wreath of legendary tales.

In the centre of his message was the thought of the Unity of God, the Omnipresence of God, and the duty of spiritual worship. Rites and sacrifices he considered useless ; the true worship of God consisted in this :

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. i, p. 179.

to praise God anew every morning and to dedicate oneself, body and soul, to the Creator. He declared that caste distinctions and religious differences were non-essential. "There is no Hindu and no Muslim" was his motto. "I reject all sects, and know only the One God whom I see in earth, and heaven, and everywhere." The equality and brotherhood of all men was the high ideal which he preached. At the same time, however, this broad and spiritual religion of Nânak's was strictly a religion of authority. In spite of the fact that he himself was a humble religious man, he required from those who joined him an unconditional obedience, indeed, the *sacrificium intellectus*. The authoritative character of his religion is implied in its name : Sikh—that is, "scholar," "one who learns," "disciple of the Guru"—of the Representative of God.

At his death Nânak entrusted the continuation of his work to one of his servants named Angad. Thus his personal dignity as a Guru became a sort of ecclesiastical office. The third Sikh-Guru, Amar Dâs, like Nânak, was a great hymn-writer, whose poems still live in the pages of the Granth. Nânak's fourth successor, Guru Ram Dâs (1574–1581), played an influential part in the further development of the Sikh religion. He established the dignity of the Guru as an hereditary office. Above all, he gave to the Sikhs a central sanctuary, a Mecca, the "Golden Temple" of Harimandar (i.e. the Temple of the Hari), which rose in the midst of the Sacred Tank [1] at Amritsar.

Scarcely less important is his son, Guru Arjun (1581–1616), who gave the Sikh religion its sacred book in the year 1604. He added some of his own poems to the writings of Nânak and Amar Dâs, and also a quantity of proof texts from the writings of Kabîr, Nâm Dev,

[1] Sanskrit : *amṛta-saras* = "Pool of Immortality."

Ravi Dâs and Farîd. This holy book, which was composed in mediæval Hindi and written in Gurmukhi character, a degenerate form of Devanâgarî (of the Sanskrit alphabet), became the *Granth*—that is, "*the* Book" *par excellence*, the sacred canon of the Sikh Scriptures, the source of inspiration and of doctrine, which inevitably lessened the influence of the Vedas and the Purâṇas. From that day forward the study of the Granth became obligatory for every Sikh, and indeed the only way of salvation. Like Islâm, Judaism and Mazdaism, the Sikh religion became the religion of a book. Guru Arjun died as a martyr for his faith at the hands of the Moslems. His son, Guru Har Govind (1606–1638), made war on the Mohammedans in order to avenge his father's death. By this act Sikhism fell away from the original teaching of Nânak, who denounced all violence, and who had always preached patience, forgivingness, and endurance of suffering. Through Har Govind the Sikh religion was led into the warrior path of its mortal enemy, Islâm. It is true that the ninth Guru, Teg Bahâdur, once more adopted the simple life of a *fakîr* which had been led by Guru Nânak, but his own son, Govind Singh, the tenth in the succession from Nânak (1675–1708), renewed the warlike spirit of Har Govind. It was he who turned the whole Sikh community into a great *ecclesia militans*, a disciplined military organisation. He it was who swore hatred and revenge against the Mohammedans on account of the martyr death of his father, Guru Teg Bahâdur, and conceived the daring idea of the destruction of the Moslem power in India. In order to weld all the followers of the Sikh religion into one, he decreed that all Sikhs should belong henceforth to one high caste, which bore the name of *khâlsâ* (from the Arabic *ḫâlis*), "the pure." The equality of all Sikhs—as also their warlike spirit—

was to be further emphasised by the addition of the name Singh.[1] In order to make this uniformity more complete, Govind strove to secure a strict external difference between the Sikhs and the rest of the Hindus and Mohammedans. He forbade his followers to use the Vedas, the Šâstras, or the Korân, nor were they to honour the authority of the Brahmans or the Mullahs. He forbade them to visit temples or holy places, or to observe the traditional Hindu ceremonies, and they were not to wear Hindu religious signs. As the outward mark of a Sikh, Singh prescribed the five "*k*'s": *kes* (long hair), *kach* (short knee-breeches), *kara* (knife), *kripân* (sword), and *kangha* (comb). In order to inspire the warlike spirit of the Sikhs he composed martial hymns in which he summoned his people to fight against the Moslems, and added them to the existing sacred writings under the title of the "Granth of the tenth King" (*Dasven Padhsa ka Granth*). Govind's social and religious reforms were only partially carried through; in practice it was found impossible to uproot either caste differences or Hindu customs. Neither were all his hymns accepted as part of the canon of the Granth. More and more the ancient writings written and compiled by Guru Arjun were singled out from all the rest as the *Âdigranth* (or original source). The permanent element in Govind Singh's work of reform was the military organisation and the warlike spirit. From that time forward the Sikh religion became literally a *militia*; the "disciples" had become "lions," the believers had turned into warriors, and saints and martyrs into soldiers.

"Blessed be the life of him who repeats continually the Name of God with his lips, and who cherishes in his heart thoughts of war"—in this sentence Govind Singh sums up the warlike piety of later Sikh religion; at the

[1] Sanskrit: *simha* = "Lion."

same time it reveals the falling away from Guru Nânak's exalted ideals.

Govind Singh was the last Sikh Guru. As the dying Buddha gave the *Dharma*, the doctrine, to his disciples as their future master, so Govind Singh solemnly declared the Granth to be the abiding Guru. "Let him who wishes to obey me obey the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sâhib. He is the visible body of the Guru." This spiritual Guru proved itself, indeed, the true commander of the *khâlsâ* ; in many external events the Sikh community received strength from it. In the nineteenth century there was an unexpected political development. Ranjit Singh (b. 1780, d. 1839) took the title of a Mahârâja and created a great Sikh kingdom which he organised on European lines. But this state only lasted a short time ; in 1845 the English overcame the heroic resistance of the Sikh people and robbed them for ever of their political independence. This political loss, however, had this result : the religious uniqueness which was the gift of Nânak and Govind Singh became much fainter, and Hinduism gained an ever stronger influence. Of recent years the Sikh religion has no longer shown that clear distinction between itself and the religious world of Hinduism ; in the opinion of the scholar Oltramare, Sikhism has become "entirely Hindu." Its followers now attend the Hindu sanctuaries, visit mosques, and watch Hindu ceremonies. To the present day, however, the Sikhs have preserved the warlike spirit of Govind Singh ; they supply the best troops for the Anglo-Indian Army, and they proved their mettle again and again during the World War. But the religious spirit of Nânak and Arjun cannot die so long as the Granth remains the Sikh Bible. In fact, of late years a new movement has arisen which studies the Granth with great enthusiasm and seeks

to renew the Sikh religion in all its original spirituality and universality. At the Berlin World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress (1910) a Sikh scholar from the University of Amritsar spoke of the spiritual greatness of his religion, and declared in glowing terms that "the second epoch of Nânak's mission had begun." The English scholar, Max Arthur Macauliffe, cherishes the same hopes; and he is working with learned Sikhs to make their sacred writings known to the West. The *Akâli* Movement, which recently swept over North India like a whirlwind, has unexpectedly confirmed the hopes of a renaissance of the Sikh religion, and has revealed once more its abiding vitality.

2. Sikh Doctrine and Worship

The doctrine of the Sacred Book of the Sikhs, the Granth, is a pronounced Monotheism, with a marked strain of Pantheism. This religion, like Islâm, lays great emphasis upon the belief in One God. Like pious Moslems, who daily repeat their *Lâ ilâh' illâ' 'llâh*, like believing Jews, who remember daily the *Jahwe echad*, the devout Sikh must make this confession in the daily morning prayer which has been handed down from the time of Nânak: "There is but one God, whose Name is True, the Creator. The True One was in the beginning; the True One was in the primal age. The True One is, was, O Nânak, and the True One also shall be."[1] In spite of this statement, however, the Sikh's belief in God differs from that of primitive Islâm and of Judaism. When we examine it more closely we find that the conception of God held by Nânak and Arjun is the same as that held by Indian and Sûfî mysticism. God is *nirguṇa* and *sarvaguṇa*, lacking all

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. i, p. 35.

distinct qualities and yet including all. He is absolutely transcendent, far above all differentiations, without any attributes or qualities ; nothing can be stated about Him, He is an entire void, an infinite emptiness, *sunn*, the expression used in the Granth, which is taken from Buddhist theology. At the same time He is also entirely immanent, contained in everything visible, differentiated, and in all the qualities of things ; He is the " Life in all that has life," " as much in the duck as in the elephant " ; above all, God " is in the heart of every human being," and here He works as " inner Light." " Wherever I look there is God ; no one else is seen."[1] God is "the all-pervading, undefinable, unfathomable Lord, within and without all things," [2] " far from all and yet with all, He is the One and He is the Many," " He is the greatest of all great beings, and at the same time the smallest of the small." He is the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the polarisation of emptiness and fullness. The hymns of Arjun especially circle round within this " harmony of contrasts," of transcendence and immanence in the idea of God. The thought of the ἕν καὶ πᾶν is sometimes expressed in the paradoxical ascriptions of identity so much beloved both by Vedantist and still more by Sûfî mystics. Thus Guru Nânak says :

" God is the fisherman and the fish, He is the water and He the net ; He Himself is that from which the net is made, He is also the desire within the fish." Guru Nânak prays : " Thou art the ocean, Thou art the foam, and Thou too art the bubble."

This connection between the Creator and the creature, the Deity and the world, is expressed in truly pantheistic style as expansion (*pasârâ*). " By Himself He extended His own Being." Yet at the same time this universal divinity which is called by the primitive name of *Brahma*

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. i, p. 319.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 321.

is conceived as personal, and is addressed in personal terms. He is called "Father" and "Saviour." He receives the personal titles of the Saviour-God: *Visnu*, *Parameshur* (Sanskrit: *Parameśvara*, "highest Lord"), *Vahguru* ("great Guru"), *Hari*, *Râm Govind*. Here is one of Arjun's prayers, which breathes so personal and so childlike a spirit that it reminds us of one of the psalms of the Old Testament:

"Thou art my Father, Thou art my Mother, Thou art my cousin, Thou art my brother; in all things Thou art my Protector. How can fear or care touch me, O Lord? By Thy mercy I have felt Thee. Thou art my support, Thou art my Refuge. There is none beside Thee, and Thy will and Thy work are over all. By Thee have all things living been created; all are set where it pleases Thee; all that has been created is Thine; nothing is ours, O Lord."

"We long for Thee, we thirst for Thee, only in Thee does our heart find rest, O Lord."

"As a child is refreshed when it has drunk milk, as a poor man is comforted when things go well with him, as a thirsty man is refreshed by water, so is my heart made glad in Hari, O Lord."

"As a lamp shines in the darkness, as one who watches for his spouse is glad when he appeareth, so exults my heart in love to Hari, my Lord."

Nânak's prayer sounds utterly Christian:

"I cannot live for a moment without Thee.
I am miserable without my Beloved, I have no friend![1] When I have Thee I have everything; Thou, O Lord, art my Treasure. . . . I hunger and thirst for a sight of Thee."[2]

So in the prayers of the Sikh saints a childlike personal faith is evident at every turn. Their prayers are full of *bhakti*, warm love and deep confidence in the personal God, the Friend and Saviour of the soul. At times this *bhakti* adopts the fiery language of love-poetry. Jayadevas Gîtagovinda, the Song of Songs of India, has also inspired the hymn-writers of the Granth. Yet even in prayers which overflow with love to God, that

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. iii, p. 138.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 87.

curious oscillation between personal Theism and impersonal Pantheism, characteristic of Sikh, Sûfî, and Bhakti religion, appears again and again. They also use the mystical phrase implying immanence : "Thou art mine and I am Thine." Indeed, it is supremely in prayer that they feel that they live and expand in the infinite. The favourite metaphor of Indian pantheism expressing the relation between God and the soul appears also in Sikh prayers : "Thou art the ocean and we are Thy fishes." From the personal intercourse of prayer the soul rises finally into the impersonal sphere of substantial union with God. Even on the lips of Nânak we hear the phrase of the Vedas : *so 'ham* ("I am He, I myself am God").

With this rich and varied conception of God are combined the primitive Indian ideas of *mâyâ* and *samsâra*. The multiplicity of things seen and temporal weaves a veil of *Mâyâ* between humanity and unseen reality, so that it is unable to discern the unity of the Godhead :

"By the fair illusions of Mâyâ the world is deceived, and rarely does a man perceive the truth." "In this spiritual blindness their human birth is lost. Being found, they are beaten at the gate of Yama ; they die and are born repeatedly." [1]

He who falls a prey to the illusion of the senses and is suffocated by the errors of multiplicity must die and be reborn, must wander on and on in the cycle of the transmigration of souls. To this root idea of the Indian philosophy of life is now added a root idea of Islâmic piety ; the idea of *Ḳadar*, of the absolute destiny of Fate and predestination, of the *decretum aeternum*.

"By His order all are produced, by His order they do their work." "Like a lost creature, man wanders about in many incarnations, like an actor he reveals many sides of his nature ; as it pleases the Lord, so must

[1] Cf. Ernst Trumpp, *The Adhi Granth*, p. 96.

he dance; that which is right in His eyes must take place." "As He Himself has created the world and it is spread abroad by three qualities, what then is religious guilt or merit, what is it? He appoints one for Hell and another for Heaven." "God dwells only in the hearts of those for whom His grace has been appointed from the beginning."

This denial of human free will, however, does not harmonise with that strong sense of sin which is so characteristic of the Sikh religion. Again and again the religious poets of the Granth confess their deep sinfulness and cry for mercy and grace:

"Redeem the sinner, that is the prayer of Nânak, my soul." "I am a sinner, Thou alone art pure. As the waters cover the sea, so are my sins in number. Give me Thy grace, have pity, that I sink not as a stone into the depths of the sea."

"We commit many sins of which there is no end. O God, be mercifully pleased to pardon them. We are great sinners and transgressors. O God, Thou pardonest and blendest unto Thee; otherwise it will not come to our turn to be pardoned." [1]

Sin and forgiveness—the central theme of the Bible and of the Christian experience of salvation—these ideas are very prominent in the prayer-life of these Sikh believers. Their certainty of the forgiving love of God is the secret of their joyful sense of salvation. "My soul is reconciled to God, and I am overwhelmed with His wonderful love"—so exults Amar Dâs in the bliss of his experience of salvation. Like the Old and the New Testament, the Granth proclaims that without humility there is no salvation and no grace. "The gate of salvation is narrow; only the humble can enter therein." "Pride hinders a man from finding God."

But as personal and impersonal ideas conflict in their thought of God, so also do they contradict each other in their doctrine of salvation. Once more these devout souls forget that eternal bliss is bound up with the Divine Gift of salvation, and they begin to long after

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. ii, p. 250.

Nirvân [1] (absorption into the Supreme). Personality, self-consciousness, individuality, all disappear, swallowed up in the ocean of the infinite Godhead. Nânak says : "The disciple is absorbed." In the unconscious bliss of a soul which has lost its individuality, as it is taught in the Upanishads and the Buddhist *Sutta-Pitakam*, the Sikh saints also seek *mukati*,[2] (the final redemption from sin, sorrow, and the endless cycle of rebirth).

"In the highest sphere there is neither joy nor sorrow, neither hope nor desire, neither caste nor caste marks, there is neither speech nor song. In the highest sphere lives naught but the vision of the Divine."

This Brahman-Buddhist view of the austere unconscious bliss of Nirvâna is varied, however, in Sikh writings, by the more colourful Mohammedan conceptions of heaven. The Granth speaks of *Sach Khand* (the 'true kingdom"), a sort of Paradise in which the faithful Sikh will receive the eternal reward for all his steadfast faith and love of God.

Thus we see that the conceptions of God and of salvation held by Nânak and his followers are a varied eclectic blend of Hinduism and Islâm. The scholar Oltramare puts it very well when he says that the religion of the Sikhs is "a kind of whirlpool in which are intermingled streams from every direction." Vedânta, and Bhagavadgîta, Korân and Sûfî writings, and finally the Bhakti poems of mediæval India—all have contributed to the tradition which has formed the Granth. Nânak's teaching, however, is very clearly distinguished from Islâm and from Hinduism by its decided spirituality. Nânak denounces the lip-service of the mere recitation of the Vedas and the Šâstras as strongly as the widespread worship of idols in Hindu temples. Just as strongly, too, he condemns the ceremonial legalism and self-righteousness of Islâm, as a dark contrast to that

[1] Sanskrit : *Nirvân.* [2] Sanskrit : *mukti.*

worship of God which is found in the hearts of those who " worship Him in spirit and in truth."

" Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer-carpet, what is just and lawful thy Quran,
Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting, so shalt thou be a Musalman . . .
There are five prayers, five times for prayer, and five names for them—
The first should be truth, the second what is right, the third charity in God's name,
The fourth good intentions, the fifth the praise and glory of God." [1]

Nânak pillories the rigid asceticism of the Brahmans, the Yogis, and the Sannyâsis :

" To burn a limb in the fire, to stand in water, to fast, to endure great heat and cold, to hold one arm up for a long time together, to stand upon one leg—all these works of penance are works of darkness."

He even goes so far as to warn his readers against the mendicant friars :

" Do not reverence those who call themselves *guru* and *pir* (an Arabic expression for a *guru*) and who beg for alms. Only those who live by the fruits of their labour and do honest and useful work are in the way of truth." " Ye should live as hermits in your own homes."

Nânak deals in a very fine way with the external, ritual, ascetic element in religion—in part he rejects it altogether, and in part he lifts it into the spiritual and ethical sphere. But he has been unable to carry this spiritual point of view right through to its logical conclusion. Man belongs to two worlds, the world of sense and the world of spirit, and in order to help him to worship he naturally desires some tangible representation of the invisible God. To the Sikh as to the Vishnu and Siva mystics and to the worshippers of Buddha Amitâbha, the tangible, sacramental sign of the eternal God is the Holy Name of God. The Divine Name is the tangible Presence of God. It contains the fullness of His supernatural might ; it has magical power.

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. i, p. 39.

" To possess the Name means to possess the Presence of God ; he who possesses this Presence is henceforth free from fear." He who pronounces the Name of Hari (one of the many titles of Vishnu-Narayana) attains in so doing the fullness of wisdom, salvation, and blessedness. Unceasingly the writers of the Granth praise the power of the Divine Name :

" The chief *mantra* (i.e. the magic formula, the Name : Hari) contains all knowledge (science). If any member of the four castes murmurs the Name, whoever he may be, his salvation is assured."

" However deeply a man may study and understand the *śâstras* (holy books) and the *smṛti* (traditions) without the Name, final salvation cannot be attained."

" Murmur the Name of Hari : Hari, my heart, that brings comfort by day and by night.

Murmur the Name of Hari : Hari, my heart, for the thought of Him drives away sin and care.

Murmur the Name of Hari : Hari, my heart, this is the end of hunger and poverty."

More clearly still the invisible God reveals Himself to the devout soul in the personality of the holy teacher, the Guru. For the Sikh the Guru is what a Divine incarnation is to the Hindu. In phrases which agree almost word for word with the Gospel of John the Granth proclaims that the Guru is the *Deus visibilis* (" God Himself in Person ") :

" The Guru is God and God is the Guru ; there is no difference between them." " God and the Guru are one." " The Word is the Guru, the Guru is the Word." " The Guru is the Creator, the Guru is the Artist ; without the Guru there is nothing ; what the Guru wills, that happens." " O God, the Guru has shown Thee to mine eyes."

As incarnate God the Guru appears as the only mediator, the way to *Parameshur* (the " Lord of All ") :

" Without the Guru man has no love for God, the filth of selfishness cannot be removed " (Nânak). " The true Guru is the true Lord ;

through His Word union with God is achieved" (Amar Dâs). "Without the true Guru no man can reach perfection." "The Guru is the guide, the Guru is the boat, the Guru is the raft, the name of Hari. The Guru is the pond, the lake, the Guru is the *tîrtha* (the sacred tank) and the ocean" (Nânak). Nânak even says: "A man hath come by whose favour the whole world shall be saved." [1]

As the visible representative of God the Guru claims divine honour, worship, believing submission, and unconditional obedience. To the Guru has been dedicated a service almost amounting to worship "such as has rarely been known in the history of religion." Arjun exhorts the Sikhs: "Wash the feet of the righteous and drink the water, offer your life to the righteous; perfect thy cleansing in the dust of the righteous, and become a sacrifice for them."

The custom of drinking the water in which the Guru has washed his feet was in olden times (before Govind Singh) a ceremony of consecration by which a religious man declared himself a disciple of the Guru (*carampâhul*).

This glorification of a human being seems to degrade the spirituality of the Sikh religion as much as the magic cult of the Sacred Name. To this day, however, their actual worship is puritan in its severe simplicity. In the Golden Temple at Amritsar there is no idol. In the Holy of Holies there are only a few copies of the Granth, which are placed upon silken cushions. Day and night there is an unceasing offering of liturgical prayer in this place. To the accompaniment of stringed instruments the Granthis, "those learned in the scriptures" (who, however, are not priests) sing passages from the Granth. (The homage which is paid to the Sacred Book is indeed little different from the homage of the Hindus to their idols.) As the Jews had their synagogue in addition to the Temple, so in addition to the sanctuary of Harimandar the Sikhs have *Dharm-*

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. iii, p. 268.

sâlâs ("halls of the sacred doctrine," plain and unadorned buildings in which the Granth is read aloud and explained). The recitation of passages from the Granth is the only religious ceremonial at all domestic celebrations : births, marriages, and funerals.

In addition to the service of the Word in which the Granth is read aloud, the Sikhs, like Protestant Christians, have two sacraments—a kind of baptism and a kind of Eucharist. The "*Pâhul* of the true religion" is the initiation rite (founded by Govind Singh) by which the young Sikh, as he enters manhood, is received into the *khâlsâ*, the "pure" community. After the candidates have bathed in the sacred tank at Amritsar a mixture of water, sugar, and sweetmeats, which has been stirred up with a dagger, is poured over them from the head downwards over the whole body while these words are pronounced (*vah guru-jî kâ khâlsâ, sirî vah guru-jî kî fate*), "Hail to the pure community of the Guru ! Victory to the sacred Guru !" The most solemn part of the gatherings for worship is the preparation and distribution of the *Karâh-prasâd*. A cake which has been made with butter, flour, and sugar is consecrated to the Guru, and then with the cry, "*Vah Guru !*" it is distributed to the faithful.

The private religious duties of the Sikh are the ritual bath (twice daily) and the reading of the Granth. For his morning prayer he has to repeat the *Japjî* of Nânak and the *Japjî* of Govind Singh ; as his evening prayer the *So-daru*, which is also in the Granth. The Sikh regards his moral and ethical duties as binding as his religious ones. The Sikh religion has a strong ethical tendency. Loyalty and uprightness, humility and obedience, generosity and hospitality, readiness to forgive and willingness to bear injustice patiently—all this is part of the life-ideal of a religious Sikh. Special emphasis

is laid upon the domestic virtues of family life, upon conjugal fidelity, the care of parents for their children, and on filial love and piety. It is this close union of religious inwardness and ethical earnestness which raises the Sikh religion above so many of the sects and groups within Hinduism and gives to it an air of nobility. In the daily morning prayer, the greatness and purity of the religious ideal of the devout Sikh can be seen very clearly :

" Make contentment and modesty thine ear-rings, self-respect thy wallet, meditation the ashes to smear on thy body ; make thy body, which is only a morsel for death, thy beggar's coat, and faith thy rule of life and thy staff.

Make association with men thine *Ai Panth* (a sect of Yogis), and the conquest of thy heart the conquest of the world.

Hail ! Hail to Him : the primal, the pure, without beginning, the indestructible, the same in every age !

Make divine knowledge thy food, compassion thy storekeeper, and the voice which is in every heart (conscience) the pipe (to call to repast).

Make Him who hath strung the whole world (on His string) thy Spiritual Lord ; let wealth and supernatural power be relishes for others.

Union and separation is the law which regulateth the world. By destiny we receive our portion.

Hail ! Hail to Him : the primal, the pure, the indestructible, the same in every age ! " [1]

Sundar Singh's ancestral faith is a pure and elevated religion, a religion in which the best of Hinduism and the best of Islâm unite, a religion which can point to its saints and its martyrs. Many elements of the Sikh religion, like belief in the forgiving Love of God and His revelation of Himself in a human being, come very near to the central truths of Christianity ; though these glimpses of revelation are indeed blurred by the strong influence of Vedantic Pantheism and Islamic fatalism. Above all, the element which robs the teaching of the Granth of any vital creative power is its eclecticism, its continual

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. i, pp. 212–213.

oscillation between Theism and Pantheism, personalism and impersonalism, belief in forgiveness, and longing for Nirvâna. In this mixed religion a soul like that of Sundar Singh, which longed intensely for a final unity and for deep satisfaction, could not find a home. But in spite of all its deficiencies and weaknesses, it was still rich enough and pure enough to become to this seeking soul a *παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν*.

Part II

THE LIFE STORY OF SUNDAR SINGH

1. Youth. Inner Conflicts[1]

SUNDAR SINGH comes of an ancient, aristocratic, and wealthy Sikh family. (4) He was born on the 3rd of September, 1889, in the village of Rampur in the State of Patiala, where his father, Sirdar Sher Singh, was a landed proprietor and lord of the manor. His home was not only full of material comfort, but of true piety. Sundar's mother, a cultivated and religious woman, wakened early in her son, who was bound to her by the ties of closest affection, the sense of the Divine and the Eternal. His saying, " I believe that every truly religious man had a religious mother," is exemplified in his own case. His mother always took him with her when she went to the temple to take an offering, or when she made her fortnightly visit to the *purohita* (priest) in the jungle in order to receive spiritual counsel and encouragement. She instructed her son in the sacred writings of the Sikh religion as well as of Hinduism. She trained him in daily devotional habits. When he woke up in the morning and asked for milk, she would say : " No, first you must have spiritual food." Although he was sometimes rather unwilling for it, he had to read portions from the Vedas and the Šâstras, the Granth and the Bhagavadgîtâ, before he had his milk. At seven years old he knew the whole of the Bhagavadgîtâ by heart—not an unusual feat, however, for an Indian boy. It was his mother, too, who first instilled into him the ideal

[1] From Sundar Singh's own account.

of the dedicated life. "You must not be superficial and worldly like your brothers," she used to say to him. "You must seek peace of soul and love religion, and one day you will become a holy Sâdhu." These words of his mother's re-echoed in the depths of the boy's soul; the impressions which he received from the peaceful simple life and bearing of the Sannyâsi whom his mother visited for counsel strengthened these feelings and aroused in his young mind the desire to become like these men. His whole inner life became a great longing for *śânti* (peace of soul). And when at last he found it, he fulfilled his mother's desires, and adopted the life of a Sâdhu as his vocation. Thus his first impulse to the *vita religiosa* came from his mother. He himself repeatedly declares that the words, example, and prayers of his mother were of decisive significance for his future development.

"The child at its mother's breast is like the clay in the hands of the potter. She can do anything with the child if she is a praying mother, if her spirit remains in contact with the spirit of the greatest of all teachers." "My mother brought me up in a religious atmosphere; she prepared me for the work of God. She did not know how I would turn out; according to the light of Hinduism she did her best. . . . She would have become a Christian if she had lived longer. Whenever I think about her I thank God for such a mother. She had a wonderful amount of light. I have seen many Christian women, but none of them came up to my mother."

At the early age of fourteen Sundar Singh lost his mother, at the time when his religious conflicts had already begun. Deep sorrow filled his heart, a sorrow which has left its mark upon him to this day. "Even to-day a look of pain comes into the Sâdhu's face and his eyes grow dim when the conversation turns upon the subject of his mother." With increased zeal he now threw himself into the study of the sacred books. He often sat up till midnight reading the Granth, the

Upanishads, and the Korân. He learnt by heart a great many passages. His Guru (religious teacher) said to Sundar's father : " Your son will become either a fool or a great man." The father remonstrated with the over-eager lad : " You will turn your brain, my son, and ruin your eyesight ! You are still a child. Why do you torment yourself so sorely over religious questions ? " Sundar Singh answered : " I must have peace at all costs. The things of this world can never satisfy me." Besides this strenuous study, he used to practise concentrated meditation for hours at a time ; but even this effort brought him no inward peace. Under the guidance of a Hindu Sannyâsi he learnt the practice of Yoga. By means of prolonged concentration he succeeded in producing a trance-state which brought him temporary relief ; but when he returned to normal consciousness he found that he was exactly where he was before the Yoga exercises began. The counsels and instructions which he received from Indian *purohita* and *sâdhus* were powerless to give him any help along the path towards peace of heart. Neither was the most faithful and earnest attendance at ceremonies and rites any inward help.

" I tried," he confesses, " to find rest through the means offered by the religions of India : Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism ; but I could not find it there." " I wanted to save myself. How I studied all our sacred books ! How I strove for peace and rest of soul ! I did good works ; I did all that could lead to peace, but I did not find it, for I could not achieve it for myself."

The peace for which Sundar Singh longed so passionately did not come from his ancestral faith, but from afar. In the mission school of his native place, which had been founded in the seventies of the previous century by the American Presbyterian missionary, Dr. Wherry, he learnt to know the New Testament,

which was read daily in the school as a "textbook." At first he refused to have anything to do with it. He was most indignant. "Why should we read the Bible? We are Sikhs, and the Granth is our sacred book." "There may possibly be good things in this book, but it is against our religion." Others, too, warned him against the Bible. "Don't read the Bible," they said, "for there is a secret power in it which will turn you into a Christian."

Sundar's hatred of Christianity grew so strong that he became the avowed leader of a group of pupils who declared themselves the "enemies of Christianity." Again and again he tore up and burnt portions of the Bible and of other Christian writings. When he saw the missionaries coming to preach the Gospel, he would cry aloud: "These people are evil-doers; they have come to spoil everything." He even went so far as to throw stones and dung at them, and he ordered his father's servants to do the same. At one time he cherished the idea of writing a pamphlet against Christianity. But in spite of this fanatical hatred the mysterious book of the Christians would not leave him alone. "Even then," he confessed, "I felt the Divine attractiveness and wonderful power of the Bible. As, sometimes, in the midst of sweltering heat a fresh breeze springs up from the sea and cools the atmosphere, so I felt its refreshing effects upon my soul." Above all, it was a word of Jesus which had begun to speak to the depths of his restless, longing soul: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Sundar could not believe it, and he cried out: "What! our religion, Hinduism, the most beautiful religion in the world, does not give me peace! How, then, can any other religion give it to me?" Yet

another word of Christ pierced his soul: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These two sayings would not let him go, they penetrated his soul ever more deeply; but he could not grasp their comforting meaning. "Christ could not save Himself, how then can He save others?"

In order to be able to confute these mysterious words he made a deeper study than ever of the religious writings of his own land. He compared them with the New Testament, but he could find no one who could say as Jesus did, "I will give you rest," still less anyone who could say, "I will give you life." The conflict between Christianity and Hinduism which raged in his soul led him at last to an outbreak of anger, and he burnt the Bible, that mysterious book which promised peace and brought with it nothing but restlessness and conflict. His father inquired with quiet disapproval: "Why do you do such a mad thing?" Sundar Singh replied: "The religion of the West is false; we must annihilate it." That day—it was the 16th of December, 1904—the Sâdhu can never forget; it was the *dies ater* of his life. The deep sense of painful remorse which the Sâdhu feels on account of this attack on the Bible vibrates in his soul to this day, and is expressed over and over again in his sermons and personal confessions. "The remembrance that I have persecuted Christ and torn up the Bible is like a perpetual thorn in my memory."

2. Conversion

(*a*) *Sundar Singh's Own Account* (5)

At last Sundar Singh's inward restlessness and unhappiness came to a head. Nothing could give him

the *śânti* he so much desired. So he made the despairing resolve to commit suicide, in the hope that he would find rest in the other world. "If I cannot find God in this world, perhaps I can find Him in the other." In the early evening of the 17th of December he went to his father and said to him: "I must say good-bye to you, for early to-morrow morning you will find me dead." "Why do you want to kill yourself?" said his father. "Because Hinduism cannot satisfy my soul, nor all this money, nor comfort, nor any of the good things of this world. Your money can satisfy the desires of my body but not those of my soul. I have done with this wretched incomplete life; I am going to finish it!" The youth intended to lie down on the railway line and allow himself to be run over by the five o'clock express when it passed the house next morning.

Early in the morning of the 18th of December, at three o'clock, he rose and took a ceremonial cold bath, according to Hindu custom and the express command of Govind Singh. Then he began to plead with God to show him the way of salvation. As his soul was full of doubts, he prayed at first "like an atheist": "O God—if there be a God—show me the right way, and I will become a Sâdhu; otherwise I will kill myself." Then he said to himself: "If nothing is revealed to me, if I still can understand nothing, then I will kill myself in order to find God in the other world." He prayed and prayed without stopping; he besought God earnestly to deliver him from this uncertainty and unrest, and to give him peace; but there was no answer. He would not be discouraged, however, and continued to strive with God in prayer in the hope of finding peace.

Suddenly—towards half-past four—a great light shone

in his little room. He thought the house was on fire, opened the door and looked out ; there was no fire there. He closed the door and went on praying. Then there dawned upon him a wonderful vision : in the centre of a luminous cloud he saw the face of a Man, radiant with love. At first he thought it was Buddha or Krishna, or some other divinity, and he was about to prostrate himself in worship. Just then, to his great astonishment, he heard these words in Hindustani : *Tu mujhe kyun satata hai ? Dekh main ne tere liye apui jan salib par di* (" Why do you persecute Me ? Remember that I gave My life for you upon the Cross "). Utterly at a loss, he was speechless with astonishment. Then he noticed the scars of Jesus of Nazareth, whom until that moment he had regarded merely as a great man who had lived and died long ago in Palestine, the same Jesus whom he had so passionately hated a few days before. And this Jesus showed no traces of anger in His face, although Sundar had burnt His holy Book, but He was all gentleness and love. Then the thought came to him : " Jesus Christ is not dead ; He is alive, and this is He Himself " ; and he fell at His feet and worshipped Him. In an instant he felt that his whole being was completely changed ; Christ flooded his nature with Divine life ; peace and joy filled his soul, and " brought heaven into his heart." When Sundar Singh rose from his knees Christ had disappeared, but the wonderful peace remained from that moment, and it has never left him since. He said afterwards : " Neither in Hindustani, my mother-tongue, nor in English, can I describe the bliss of that hour."

Full of joy, he roused his father, exclaiming : " I am a Christian ! " " You are off your head, my boy," said the bewildered man ; " go away and sleep ! The

day before yesterday you burnt the Bible, and now all of a sudden you say that you are a Christian ! How can you explain such behaviour ? " Sundar replied : " Because I have seen Him. Until now I always said, ' He is simply a man who lived two thousand years ago.' But to-day I have seen Him Himself, the living Christ, and I intend to serve Him, for I have felt His power. He has given me the peace which no one else could give. Therefore I know that He is the living Christ. I will, and I must, serve Him." Then his father said : " But just now you were going to kill yourself ? " The boy answered : " I have killed myself: the old Sundar Singh is dead ; I am a new being."

This Vision of Christ was the turning-point of the Sâdhu's whole life. It brought him the fulfilment of his passionate longing and anguished striving : *šânti*, that wonderful peace, " the peace which passes all understanding," " heaven upon earth." " After I had wearied myself out in searching through Hinduism, at last I found in Christ the rest and peace which my soul desired." Sundar Singh regards his conversion as a direct revelation, a " miracle " in the strict sense of the word, something absolutely supernatural. Like every true convert, Sundar Singh rejects all naturalistic explanations of this experience, and defends it most decidedly as a purely " supernatural " work of grace.

" What I saw was no imagination of my own. Up to that moment I hated Jesus Christ and did not worship Him. If I were talking of Buddha I might have imagined it, for I was in the habit of worshipping him. It was no dream. When you have just had a cold bath you don't dream ! It was a reality, the Living Christ ! *He can* turn an enemy of Christ into a preacher of the Gospel. He has given me His peace, not for a few hours merely, but throughout sixteen years—a peace so wonderful that I cannot describe it, but I can testify to its reality."

"That which other religions could not do for many years Jesus did in a few seconds. He filled my heart with infinite peace."

"Neither reading nor books brought about the change—no, it is Christ Himself who has changed me." "When He revealed Himself to me I saw His glory, and I knew that He was the Living Christ."

(*b*) *Critical Considerations*

Sundar Singh sees in his conversion a manifestation of the transcendental God, a revelation of the Living Christ. Indeed, he emphasises the objectivity of his experience of Christ to such an extent that he separates this vision from others which have been granted to him during ecstasy (as, for instance, during his fast). To Professor Hadorn of Berne he said clearly: "I have had visions, and I know how to distinguish them, but Jesus I have only seen once." For him, as for the apostles, the Risen Christ is an objective, concrete reality.

In contradistinction to this realistic and religious explanation of the miracle of conversion, modern religious science suggests one that is natural and psychological. The psychological process which those who have studied conversion experiences have discovered is easily discernible in the Sâdhu's experience: the utmost tension of effort, followed by a state of despair and complete cessation from struggle, culminating in a sudden inflow of assurance. The "local colour" on the phantasy side of the experience is easily explained by the influence of the story of Paul's conversion, which is obviously very similar. Although the Sâdhu does not remember having heard of Paul's vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, this still seems probable, as the New Testament was read daily in the mission school. It seems quite likely that Sundar Singh's inward struggles and their solution were inevitably coloured by the Pauline experience.

Finally, we have to remember that such experiences of conversion are not at all rare in India.

A leading figure in the Indian Methodist Church, Theophilus Subrahmanyam, was also led to Christ, and to work for Him among the outcasts, by a wonderful vision. The famous Mahratta evangelist and poet, Nârayan Vaman Tilak, had a vision of Christ in August 1917, a few months before his death. (6) Sundar Singh's teacher, the Presbyterian missionary, Mr. Fife, calls attention to the striking experiences of conversion which occurred in a spiritual awakening in the Khasi Hills in Assam. The Indian mind is much more prone to visionary experience than the European.

Of the actual reality of Sundar Singh's wonderful conversion there can be no shadow of doubt. It is quite impossible that the Sâdhu could have invented the story later. Mr. Redman, who examined him most carefully nine months after this event, in order to find out whether he was ready for baptism, then heard about his conversion by a vision of Christ. The fact that Sundar Singh only speaks of this most sacred experience in his public addresses, and does not talk about it in ordinary conversation, is only another proof of his sincerity. To point out that this conversion resembles the conversion of St. Paul, to say that the whole experience conforms to a certain type and that similar experiences often occur among Indian Christians, does not offer any clear and complete explanation ; it only makes it somewhat easier to understand. Psychology is merely able to trace the course followed by these experiences (both in the conscious and unconscious life of the soul), but it cannot account for their real significance. The religious intuition of the convert alone is able to perceive the Divine reality and the working of Divine grace behind all the historical and psychological processes

through which it is revealed. This reality may indeed make use of accidental outward historical influences which govern mental life and growth, but it is itself that "wholly other" which lies far beyond all the laws of psychology and breaks through them in the act of revelation.

For Sundar Singh, as for all others whose conversion is of this type, the content of the revelation is the wonder of Divine Judgment and of Divine Grace. The judgment convinces man of his entire inability to achieve his own salvation; grace gives him the assurance of salvation apart from his own efforts. This fundamentally Christian experience of the uselessness of human effort, and of the sole reality of the working of the Grace of God through His revelation of Himself in the death of Christ on the Cross—this is the heart of Sundar Singh's "experience of conversion." "When Christ revealed Himself to me, then I saw that I was a sinner and that He is my Saviour." Sundar Singh therefore belongs to the same category as Paul and Luther, and every Christian soul to whom the question of sin and grace is the central problem of life. The difference is simply this: that Paul came to realise his own sinfulness and helplessness in the light of the Jewish Torah, Luther in the light of the Rule of Monasticism, while Sundar Singh came to this conviction through the Bhagavadgîtâ, by the philosophical and mystical path of Hinduism.

"Hinduism had taught me that there was a heaven; I did my best to free myself from sin, and in all things to act in accordance with the Will of God. I tried to save myself by my own good works, which were quite useless, and could not save me. I was proud of Indian religion and philosophy; but philosophy cannot save sinners. In despair I besought God to show me the way of salvation. In answer to my prayer I saw my Saviour; He showed me what I really was in myself. I had never expected to see anything of this sort."

This essentially Pauline experience of grace is the content of Sundar Singh's conversion ; the external form which embodied this inward experience is the Vision of Christ. Sundar Singh admits, however, that this external form is not essential ; that, in other words, the Christian experience of the grace of God can be just as real apart from all miraculous accompaniments, and is, in fact, usually imparted in this way. When he speaks of his own conversion he usually adds the words of our Lord : " Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed " ; he places himself humbly beneath those Christians who have experienced the secret of the Living Christ and the wonder of His saving grace without any marvellous visions ; for that very reason, therefore, he considers Luther, who had no vision of Christ, to be greater than he. But he is convinced that in the difficult circumstances of his life he would never have found the way of salvation without this extraordinary revelation of Christ, and therefore that in his case God used unusual means to effect his conversion. This irregular visionary form of the Christian experience of grace becomes psychologically more comprehensible when we realise the way in which Sundar Singh views the contact of man with the supernatural world.

" The brain is a very delicate and sensitive tool, fitted with many fine faculties which, in meditation, can receive messages from the unseen world, and thoughts which go far beyond normal human consciousness. The brain does not work up these thoughts; they come to it from the spiritual world, and the mind translates them into a language which is suitable for human circumstances and situations. Many people receive such messages in dreams, others in visions, and others in waking hours during meditation."

Sundar Singh would doubtless hesitate to apply this statement to his own experience of conversion, which

he rightly considers the turning-point in his life, of far greater value than all the rest of his ecstatic and visionary experience. When a Swiss missionary secretary asked him whether his conversion was caused by an objective appearance of Christ or a subjective vision, he answered him quite decidedly : "No vision, no vision ; appearance ! appearance !" But these reflections help those of us who are mere spectators to arrive at a sane, true, and "all-round" view of this remarkable event. The image of "wireless telegraphy" is a beautiful symbol both of the reality of Divine revelation and the experience of grace, and also of its entirely spiritual and incomprehensible character. As the ether waves which transmit wireless messages are invisible, so also the soul's contact with transcendental reality lies far beyond all human knowledge. And just as these wave movements have to be picked up by the receiver in order to be perceived by the human ear, so the spiritual revelation of God must be made perceptible to the human spirit in some tangible way if it is to be grasped at all. This perception usually takes place through original or stereotyped imaginative conceptions ; sometimes, however, it is mediated through pictorial visions of great colour and intensity. We must not discount these visions as hallucinations, for they are not compensatory phantasies, but merely the expression of some supranatural experience. Sundar Singh's conversion is like the experience of all truly religious men and women in this—it is a revelation of Divine reality, a miracle of Divine grace. But the miracle does not lie in the external vision of Christ, but above it and behind it. The outward form is only the necessary expression—in a way which the senses can grasp—of direct spiritual contact with Divine Reality mediated by the "Living Christ."

3. Trial and Persecution

After Sundar Singh had so wonderfully found his Saviour, he spent several days in solitary prayer. More and more his conscience was burdened with shame as he thought of the way in which he had desecrated the Bible three days before his conversion. In fervent prayer he besought God for forgiveness : " My God, forgive me. I was spiritually blind ; I could not understand Thy Word ; that is why I burnt the Bible." Then he received from the Lord this comforting assurance : " Thou wast spiritually blind, but now I have opened thine eyes. Go forth and witness of Me." " Bear witness to this great thing that has happened to thee ; confess openly that I am Thy Deliverer ! " As in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles, conversion and vocation to preach the Gospel followed close upon each other.

The first witness given by the fifteen-year-old lad to his Saviour was his steadfast courage in confessing Christ to his family and among his friends. His father appealed to him to give up his new faith, adjuring him by his Sikh pride of birth, by the honour of his family, and by his devotion to his mother—but all in vain. When it was obvious that his father could not shake his determination, an uncle who was in a high position tried to force him to remain true to the Sikh religion. But the youthful Christian disciple stood firm ; his faith in Christ was more to him than all the treasures of this world. In addition to painful scenes and arguments with his own family, he had to endure scorn, mockery, and persecution. His former companions reproached him as a perjurer, renegade, and deceiver ; his own brother persecuted him with bitter hatred ;

the whole population rose up against him in indignation. The teacher of the school, Mr. Newton, was accused before the local authority of bringing pressure to bear upon the pupils to accept Christianity. But Sundar Singh and his friend Gurdit Singh, who became a Christian at the same time, testified to the teacher's innocence before the magistrate, thereby increasing the ill-will of the people of the place against them, and still more against all the Christians of the village. Many of these Christians had to leave the district. Finally, on account of the threatening attitude of the population, the mission station had to be closed. Sundar Singh knew that his life was in actual danger, and he sought refuge at the Presbyterian mission school at Ludhiana, which was under the guidance of Dr. Wherry. Here he had his first painful experiences among Christians ; his fellow-pupils were mostly nominal Christians who did not live according to the teaching of Christ. Disappointed, he left the mission school and returned to his own family. But his faith in the Redeemer was not shattered. Very soon his family saw that his return to them was no return to the faith of his fathers. When they saw that he was not to be turned away from the Christian religion, they tried to persuade him to keep it secret. Sundar Singh was tempted to accede to their request ; he even thought of going to some distant place to be baptised and then of returning to his own family. The thought of complete separation from all his possessions, his home, and his relations seemed insupportable. But a voice said to him : " He who confesses Me before men will I confess before the face of My Father in Heaven." And he overcame the temptation and said to himself : " I am willing to suffer anything for my Lord, but I cannot deny Him." When all the remonstrances of his family were fruitless,

they took him before the Mahârâja. The latter impressed upon him the disgrace he was bringing on himself and his family by his confession of Christ. "Sher Singha (Lion-heart), how is it that you have turned into a coward?" Then he offered him a post of high honour if he would remain true to the faith of his fathers. But Sundar Singh refused to be led astray by such considerations; he confessed Christ fearlessly before them all. Soon afterwards he made a complete break with the Sikh community by cutting off his long hair. From this time forward his family treated him as an outcast. He had to sleep and eat outside the house like a leper. At length his father disinherited him and drove him away from home. Taking nothing with him save his New Testament and a little parcel of provisions, the sixteen-year-old Sundar Singh began to tread the *pravrajya*, the "Way of Homelessness," which all the great religious men of India have trodden since the days of Mahâvîra Vardhamâna Jina and Gautama Siddhârtha Buddha. The first night—he tells us—he spent shivering under a tree, for it was cold. There he sat, enduring hunger and thirst and cold, his New Testament in his hands. Then Satan whispered in his ear: "At home everything was pleasant and comfortable, and now you are suffering." Then he began to compare his life in his parents' home with his present "homelessness": in the midst of the comfort and luxury of his home he was restless and unhappy, while now, in the midst of a cold night, alone in the open air under a tree, his soul was flooded with wonderful peace.

The Sâdhu says: "That was my first night in Heaven. The world could not give me such peace. Christ, the Living Lord, breathed into me a glorious peace. The cold pierced me through and through, I was a hungry outcast, but I had the sense of being enfolded in the power of the Living Christ." "The presence of my Redeemer turned suffering into joy."

In his desolate condition Sundar Singh besought God to guide him on his way. In answer to his prayer he received the command to go to the Christians at Rupar, many of whom had fled thither from his native place. He had scarcely reached the house of the resident Presbyterian missionary, Mr. Uppal, when he broke down completely. The poison which one of his relations had mixed with a sweet dish at his last meal at home had begun to work. (Already his friend Gurdit Singh, who had helped him to defend the teacher before the magistrate, had been poisoned by his father, and had died from the effects of the poison.) Mr. Uppal and his wife called in the chemist's assistant, who promptly gave Sundar the required treatment, and stayed with him till late in the evening, finally leaving him with little hope of his recovery. When the chemist visited Sundar Singh next morning, to his great surprise he found that he had begun to get better.

When Sundar Singh was sufficiently recovered, he returned to the Christian Boys' Boarding School at Ludhiana. Both the Presbyterian missionaries, Dr. Wherry and Dr. Fife, received him with such love and cared for him so tenderly that he says that they did more for him than his own parents could have done. Again and again his relations tried to take him away from the school. Once his father himself came and tried to persuade him to return home. But Sundar Singh stood firm ; he pointed out to his father that he had attained such a wonderful peace in Christ that he would not exchange it for any earthly happiness whatsoever.

In order to relieve Sundar Singh from the constant pressure of his relations, and to save him from being attacked by the mob, the missionaries now sent him to Subathu, a medical mission station near Simla. There

in quietness he studied the Bible and prepared himself for baptism. According to Indian law, he could not go over to Christianity until he was sixteen, so he had to wait for his birthday. On account of the popular excitement, the Ludhiana missionaries did not consider it wise to baptise him there. Dr. Fife, therefore, who had now taken over the charge of the school, sent him with a letter of introduction to Mr. Redman, the senior missionary of the Church Missionary Society at Simla, and asked him, after careful examination of Sundar Singh, to baptise him. Sundar Singh went to Simla in the company of several other boys of his own age, and also with a free-lance missionary, Mr. Stokes, and handed his teacher's letter of introduction to Mr. Redman. The latter writes thus of this meeting :

" I was deeply impressed by his sincerity. I examined him carefully, and asked him a great many questions about the chief facts of the Gospel. Sundar Singh replied to my entire satisfaction, and he evinced even then an extraordinary knowledge of the Life and Teaching of Christ. Then I inquired into his personal experience of Christ as his Saviour. Again I was more than satisfied. And I told him I would be very glad to baptise him on the following day, which was a Sunday. He replied that he desired to be baptised because it was the will of Christ, but that he felt so sure that the Lord had called him to witness for Him, that even if I could not see my way to baptise him, he would have to go out and preach."

On Sunday the 3rd of September, 1905, on his sixteenth birthday, Sundar Singh was baptised in St. Thomas's Church at Simla by Mr. Redman, according to the rite of the Anglican Church. The opening words of the twenty-third Psalm, which formed part of the baptismal service, were at the same time a prophecy of the life of a wandering friar upon which the Sâdhu was about to enter : " The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want."

4. The Sâdhu's Sphere of Activity

(*a*) *Missionary Journeys in the East*

In North India

"Go forth and bear witness of Me"—this was the command which Sundar Singh had received from his Master after his conversion. Now he had to obey this call. But how was he, a lad of sixteen, to witness to the power and love of his Saviour? Then there stole into his mind the words of his mother: "One day you will be a Sâdhu." Would he not find a hearing for the Good News among his own countrymen if he came to them in that garment which since the days of the Vedas has been held sacred in India? This garment has indeed become the "chief symbol of the ascetic life" throughout the whole of Asia, associated as it is with all the greatest religious men of India: with Mahâvira, Vardhâmana Jina, and Gautama Siddhartha Buddha, with his mendicant friars, Chaitânya and Tulsi Dâs—yes, and also with Guru Nânak, the founder of Sundar Singh's own previous form of religious belief. Could he not, he argued, in this robe (which more than two millions of Indians wear at the present time) (7) become an Indian to the Indians? Would he not find a hearing if, in the homeless, poor, and celibate life of a Sâdhu, he fulfilled that religious ideal which for three thousand years has been proclaimed by the great religions of India? Would he not find an "open door" if he came preaching the Gospel of Christ as *nirgrantha*, a "breaker of fetters," as *sannyâsi*, "one who has renounced the world," as *bhikṣu*, a "mendicant friar," as *sâdhu*, a "religious pilgrim," as *faḳîr*, "one who has chosen poverty"? Would he not be able to be "all things to all men"

if he were to don the yellow robe of the ascetic—for this robe would give him an entrance to all castes ; yes, even to the women's quarters ? Thoughts such as these finally led Sundar Singh to resolve to become a Christian Sâdhu, an evangelist in the garment of an Indian ascetic.

Sundar Singh was not the first to don the yellow robe of the ascetic in order to become "an Indian to the Indians." Since time immemorial the priests of the secret Sannyâsi Mission (a secret Christian Church claiming to have been founded in the days of the Apostle Thomas, the first missionary to India) have worn this garb, in order to be able to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance, quietly and unobtrusively, among their fellow-countrymen. Missionaries, too, who have worked openly have worn this dress in order to get nearer to the hearts of the Indian people. The famous Robert de Nobili, a nephew of Bellarmin, who began to work in Madura in 1605, followed the strict rule of a Brahman *Sannyâsi*, and thus was able to win several Brahmans to Christianity. Among the Christian evangelists of more recent times who have adopted this method, perhaps the most outstanding is Bhavanî Charan Banerji, a Bengali of Brahman descent (b. 1861), who was at first an enthusiastic champion of the principles of the *Brahma-Samâj*, then was baptised in the Anglican Church ; soon after, however, he joined the Church of Rome. In December 1894 he adopted the yellow robe, took the new name of *Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâya* (Theophilus, the Under-Shepherd) and chose the life of a *Bhikhu Sannyâsi*. He cherished the great idea of founding a *matha* (monastery) of Catholic Hindu *Sannyâsis* (including both enclosed contemplatives and wandering friars). "We ought not to rest," he wrote, "until the religion of Christ is lived by Indian ascetics

and preached by Indian monks, until the beauty of the Catholic faith is revealed in an Oriental setting." His far-reaching programme for this new order was warmly supported by Bishop Pelvat of Nagpur, but it was wrecked by the opposition of Archbishop Dalhoff, S.J., of Bombay, and of the Papal Legate Zalesky. Several of his followers still wear the yellow robe at the present time, and are carrying on the spirit of his work. To-day many Roman Catholic missionaries in India acknowledge the necessity of putting into practice the missionary policies of Nobili and Brahmabandhav, and of going forward with the idea of founding purely Indian monastic Orders. (8)

We can scarcely believe that the youth Sundar Singh had heard of all these known and unknown Christian *Sannyâsis* ; rather, he seems to have chosen the life of a Christian Sâdhu under the influence of memories of his childhood. His teacher, Dr. Wherry, advised him to attend the theological school at Saharampur in order to lay a thorough foundation for his calling as an evangelist. But Sundar Singh said frankly that he preferred the ideal of his own countrymen, and wished to preach the Gospel as a wandering Sâdhu. With prophetic insight Dr. Wherry saw the significance of this step and gave him his blessing. So, thirty-three days after his baptism, the young Christian donned the sacred robe and made the vow to be a Sâdhu his whole life long. (9)

" I have vowed myself to Him for my whole life, and with the help of His grace I will never break my vow." " On the day on which I became a Sâdhu I chose this robe as my life-companion, and as far as this depends upon me I will never give it up."

So the sixteen-year-old lad went out to his missionary wanderings, barefooted, with no possessions, without any protection against wild beasts. Besides his thin

linen garment and a blanket, which he often wound round his head as a turban, his only property was a New Testament in his mother tongue. He never begged ; he depended upon alms given by kind-hearted people ; if these were withheld, he had to try to satisfy his hunger with roots and leaves. If kindly folk received him into their houses, he accepted the hospitality gratefully. If he found no shelter, then he would sleep in a dirty inn, or even in a cave or under the trees. His Hindu fellow-countrymen often gladly gave him food and shelter ; on the other hand, he generally met with great hostility among the Mohammedans as soon as they learnt that he was a *Christian* Sâdhu. Sometimes he would be chased out of a house, followed by curses and insults, and he would have to take refuge in the jungle, where he would pass the night hungry and shivering. Even among Christian missionaries, like Brahmabandhav before him, Sundar Singh met with much suspicion ; many saw in the Sâdhu-life a Hindu ideal of piety which could not be used for Christ, and they therefore criticised his missionary method very severely. Sundar Singh was specially fond of going to shrines where pilgrims congregated, where he would meet large numbers of Sâdhus and Sannyâsis, to whom he could preach the Gospel. He also went to the women (to whom it was impossible to preach in public), in order to speak of Christ to them. Dr. Wherry gives a vivid description of such a meeting for women :

" The Hindu women heard of his coming and persuaded a Christian woman, whom they visited in her zenana, to invite them to her house, which was surrounded by a wall, and let the Sâdhu speak to them. This woman told me that sixty or seventy women of the best families came and listened to him for an hour. They sat there with folded hands, and as they went away they said : ' What he says is true, and we believe every word ; Jesus Christ *is* the Redeemer.' "

At first the Sâdhu preached the Gospel in his native place and in the surrounding villages, then he wandered, preaching, through the Punjab to Afghanistan and Kashmir—lands in which Christian missions had scarcely begun any work at that time. After a long and fatiguing missionary tour he returned to Kotgarh, a little place near Simla in the Himalayas, in order to rest. There he joined the American missionary, Mr. Stokes (whom we have already mentioned), who belonged to a wealthy family and had come to India to preach the Gospel like a Franciscan friar. (10) Following the Sâdhu's example, he also donned the yellow robe of the ascetic. He also told the Sâdhu a great deal about St. Francis of Assisi. The two agreed to unite their forces for the preaching of the Gospel, and they started out on a very difficult and trying journey through the Kangra Valley. On the way Sundar Singh, whose young body was not yet inured to so much hardship, fell ill in the jungle with a bad attack of fever. His companion dragged him to the house of a European, where he was tenderly nursed for a long time. In the year 1907 the two gave themselves to work in the leper asylum at Subathu, and to the care of the sick in the Plague Hospital at Lahore. Day and night they devoted themselves to the sick, hardly allowing themselves sufficient sleep, spending their nights on the bare ground between dying patients. When Mr. Stokes was obliged to return to America through illness, Sundar Singh went on with his mission work alone. From Lahore he went to Sind, and then returned by way of Rajputana. In tireless evangelistic work his own inner life became deeper and stronger. Mr. Redman, who met him at Sialkot, two years after his baptism, at a meeting, says : " I was deeply impressed by the maturity of his Christian character, which was

evident in his speech and behaviour. He seemed no longer a boy, but a young man, strong in faith, although he was only nineteen years old."

Sundar had a passionate longing to go to Palestine to see the place where his Lord had lived and suffered. When he reached Bombay, however, he had to give up the idea as impracticable. So he wandered through Central India to his native country, preaching as he went along. In the year 1909, acting on the advice of his Christian friends, he entered St. John's Divinity College at Lahore and began to study theology. At the College, at that time under the leadership of Canon Wood, he received instruction in the Bible and Prayer Book, elementary Church History, Apologetics, and Comparative Religion. Here, too, he learnt to know the *Imitation of Christ*, which he read over and over again, and which made a deep impression upon his spiritual life. Otherwise the study of theology meant very little to his simple, direct piety. On the contrary, it seems as though it was this sojourn at the Divinity College which aroused in Sundar Singh that deep distaste for theological intellectualism which appears so continually in all his sermons and self-revelations. At Christmas 1909 he was promoted from the Beginners' Class to the Junior Catechists' Class ; in 1910 he left the seminary, having received a licence to preach in the Anglican churches of the diocese of Lahore.

In the meantime his friend Stokes had returned from America, having received permission from the Archbishop of Canterbury to found a Franciscan Brotherhood called *The Brotherhood of the Imitation*. The two members of the new community, Stokes and Western (now a Canon in Delhi), took the vows in the Cathedral at Lahore. Sundar Singh worked in close connection with the new Brotherhood, but he did not actually join

it, as his individualistic tendency was not at home in the strict ecclesiasticism of this truly Franciscan community ; indeed, he could not manage to confine himself within the limits of his Anglican preaching activity. Like John Wesley, he regarded the whole world as his parish, and preached everywhere and to all who would receive his message. Some ecclesiastically minded men were not pleased with this unlimited evangelisation, and explained to him that this method of work was " not desirable in a deacon, and that for an ordained man it would be quite impossible." He would only be allowed to preach in other dioceses with the permission of their respective bishops, and if he were ordained in the Anglican Church he would be forbidden to preach in other Christian churches. Sundar Singh considered that to be bound to one communion like this would narrow his Sâdhu vocation. " He simply desired to be a Christian, united to the One Body of Christ."

During a quiet time of prayer, he attained the certainty that it was the Will of God that he should preach the Good News of Christ without holding the office of a priest and without the commission of any particular Church. He went to his bishop (Bishop Lefroy of Lahore, later the Anglican Primus in India), who had been especially friendly to him during his student days, and asked him to take back his preacher's licence. The Bishop realised that the Sâdhu had a true " prophetic vocation," and he did as he was asked. Sundar Singh's wise friend, Dr. Wherry, also approved of this step. The renunciation of the preacher's licence did not, however, imply a break with the Anglican Church, to which the Sâdhu belonged by baptism. He continued to preach in Anglican churches, especially in the Church of St. Thomas at Simla ; he also continued to be a regular communicant of the Church of England. His

relations with his Anglican friends and well-wishers were as cordial as ever. Even at the present time the Sâdhu considers himself, from the ecclesiastical point of view, a member of the Anglican Church.

Freed from official and ecclesiastical ties, Sundar Singh now went forward as a pure *nirgrantha*, as a Christian Sâdhu, to be all things to all men. When he was travelling through Eastern India, at Sarnath, where the Buddha had long ago begun his work, he came into touch for the first time with members of the secret Sannyâsi Mission, of whom Dr. Wherry had already spoken to him some time before. These esoteric Christians, who consider themselves "Followers of the Asiatic Christ," are scattered over the whole of India, and are to be found in some of the neighbouring countries. In general they belong to the upper classes of society. According to some accounts they number several hundred thousand. One section of this community has formed itself into a secret Christian Church, fully organised on the lines of the Syrian Church, founded by the Apostle Thomas, with which it considers itself united.[1] These organised Sannyâsis fall into two groups : *Svâmi* (Lords, Rulers, Teachers) and *Śiṣya* (learners). The former, who are believed to number about seven hundred, live the celibate ascetic life and wear the saffron robe ; they all bear the title of *Nand*.[2] The members of this secret Church meet in "Houses of Prayer" very early in the morning. These meeting-houses look like Hindu temples from the outside, but within there is neither picture nor altar ; their worship is conducted in Sanskrit. At times, too, they celebrate the rites of Baptism and Holy Communion. Their motto is : *Yiṣu Nasrinâth kî jai* ("Victory belongs to Jesus of Nazareth"). Again and again in times of per-

[1] *Svâmi Thamsa Nand.* [2] Sanskrit : *Ânanda*, Blessedness.

secution and difficulty the Sâdhu has received help from these secret Sannyâsis. Repeatedly he has urged them to come out of their retirement and proclaim Christ openly. This is their answer :

" Our Lord has called us to be fishers. When a fisherman is at work he makes no noise ; he sits quietly there until his net is full ; for if he were to make the slightest sound the fish would escape. That is why we work in stillness ; when the net is full the whole world will see what we have been doing."

At the end of 1912 Sundar Singh was asked to go and preach the Gospel to four thousand Sikh lumbermen who had emigrated to Canada. He was ready to go, and it would have been a joy to him to do so ; but the plan fell through because the Canadian Government refused to grant him a passport. While his friend Canon Sandys was making great efforts, though all in vain, to persuade the Canadian Government to give him permission, Sundar Singh went out on another preaching tour. When he had been travelling for some weeks, he resolved to put into practice a long-cherished desire and to fast for forty days in the desert. (11) He believed that in this way he would become more deeply conformed to Christ inwardly, and that this would lead to greater Christlikeness of life. Perhaps he was also influenced to some extent by St. Francis of Assisi, who kept a strict fast every year during Lent. Possibly, too, he had heard of the action of his great predecessor, the Sannyâsi Brahmabandhav, who fasted during the whole of Lent in 1899 in order to prepare himself for the founding of his Sannyâsi Order. Doubtless, however, the Sâdhu was also influenced, though quite unconsciously, by motives drawn from primitive Indian asceticism. Had not the Buddha fasted to the point of utter exhaustion in order to receive greater enlightenment ? In the old collection of Buddhist

writings called the *Sutta-Nipâto* the writer makes the Buddha speak thus about his resolve to fast :

> "When my body is worn to a shadow
> Ever more clearly shines the soul,
> Ever more alert becomes the spirit
> Steeped in wisdom and in contemplation."

In spite of strong advice to the contrary from a Roman Catholic Sâdhu named Smith, who travelled with him to North India, Sundar Singh carried out his resolve. On or about the 25th of January, 1913, he withdrew into the jungle between Hardwar and Dehra Dun, and, like Buddha long ago at Uruvela, he gave himself up to meditation and prayer. In order to keep some account of time, he placed near him a heap of forty stones, one of which he was to throw aside every day. His physical strength declined rapidly ; his sight and hearing became dim ; soon his body was so weakened that he was unable to throw away a stone each day. His spiritual life, on the contrary, became increasingly full of clearness and liberty ; in a state of ecstatic concentration he lived entirely in the supernatural world. Though his bodily sight was so weak that he could no longer distinguish anything in the world about him, with his spiritual vision he thought he beheld Christ Crucified, with His wounded Hands and Feet, and His Countenance so full of love. While his body was helpless and without feeling his soul experienced the deepest peace and the most wonderful happiness.

At most he can only have been fasting for about ten or twelve days, when some wood-cutters found him at the beginning of February in the jungle and brought him to Rishi Kesh. Thence he was carried to Dehra Dun. At the railway station some Christian peasants

saw and recognised him, and they took him by bullock-cart to the Christian village of Annfield, where he was taken into the house of the Anglican pastor Dharamjit. The pastor's adopted son, Bansi, and some of the village Christians cared for him most tenderly. Under their care he made a rapid recovery, and in March he was able to set out again on a preaching tour. He went to Simla, where his friend Mr. Redman put before him the great risks of such a dangerous experiment. The Sâdhu, however, was convinced of the good results of his fast. As he has said often since then, he felt that the fast had renewed and strengthened him inwardly. Temptations, hindrances, and perplexities, which had previously troubled him, had all disappeared. He was freed from the temptation to give up the calling of a Sâdhu and return to his father's house. Up to that time, in periods of exhaustion, he would be tried with rebellious feelings—these were now swept away ; now, too, he was convinced that the soul was independent of the body, a matter about which he had been uncertain before. Above all, he was now sure that that wonderful peace which he enjoyed was no merely subjective experience, the working of some secret vital force, but the objective result of the Divine Presence. (12)

In Simla, too, Sundar Singh heard that the news of his death had been spread abroad widely. Before he began his fast, the Roman Catholic ascetic to whom he had confided his intention, and to whom, at his own request, he had given the addresses of his friends, had telegraphed the news of Sundar's death, evidently intending to mislead them. In consequence, a special memorial service was held at Simla, in which Mr. Redman and Brother Stokes took part ; the service was reported in Indian missionary papers and obituary

notices appeared in many of them. The fact that the sender of the telegrams could not be discovered made several of the Sâdhu's acquaintances suspect that he himself had sent off the telegrams ; all his intimate friends, however, are convinced that this suspicion is entirely groundless.

Tibet and Nepal

From the early days of his missionary activity Sundar Singh had made the bold resolve to go to Tibet, that "dark, closed land," as he calls it, to preach the Gospel in this stronghold of Buddhism. He knew neither the language nor the country nor the people ; he only knew that the difficulties in the way of preaching the Gospel in this land were very great. But in his love to Christ, his zeal for the Gospel, and his readiness to lay down his life for Christ, he shrank from no danger or difficulty.

Tibet is one of the most mysterious lands in the world ; a Tibetan saying describes it as the "Great Ice Land." Its geographical remoteness from the surrounding countries and the strange beauty of its mountains render it a land of marvels, no less than the wealth of its great monasteries with their treasures of sacred writings and their grandiose form of worship.

Tibet is the European form of *to-bhod*, i.e. "Highlands of the *Bhod* people" ; still more usual is the term *bhod-yul*, "Land of the *Bhod* people." The inhabitants of this mountain region who speak Tibetan call themselves *bhod-par*, "*Bhod* people" ; this term is also used by Indians in speaking of the Tibetan inhabitants of the mountains. Neither the mountaineers nor Indians make any difference between those who live in the Lhasa region and the dwellers in Western Tibet, who are at present British subjects. In the year 1841 a large part of Western *Bhod* country, Ladakh, Spiti, Zangskar, Kunawar, was separated from the territory of *Bhod-yul* and incorporated with British India. This district looks exactly like the rest of Tibet, is inhabited by a purely Tibetan population, and contains many lamasseries. These regions,

especially Spiti and Zangskar, are as wild and inhospitable as any parts of Tibet proper. It is not, therefore, necessary to call them Indian and to keep the term "Tibet" solely for the rest of Tibet. The only correct way to describe this country is to distinguish between *Lesser Tibet* (i.e. the separated regions under British control) and *Greater Tibet* (i.e. the region whose capital is Lhasa). This exact terminology fits in with the Tibetan use of the names; this alone clears away the misunderstanding aroused by the inexact use of the names, even in connection with Sundar Singh.

The Sâdhu was not the first Christian missionary to try to enter this inhospitable land with the Good News of Christ; (13) Christian Missions in Tibet have indeed already a remarkable history behind them. Early in the fourteenth century a Franciscan friar, Odorich of Pordenone (Friaul), passed through Tibet on a missionary journey. In the seventeenth century the Portuguese Jesuit, Fr. d'Andrada, began organised mission work in Tibet which met with a measure of success, but at the end of twenty-five years it collapsed. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Capuchins took up the work afresh, but in 1745 they also had to leave the country. A hundred years later two Lazarists, Huc and Gabet, tried to get a footing in Lhasa itself, but after two years they were obliged to leave.

In the same year, 1846, by Papal authority, an Apostolic Vicariate was formally established at Lhasa and the Tibet Mission was entrusted to the *Missions Etrangères*. In 1847 the Chinese missionary Renou made an unsuccessful attempt; it was not until 1854 that he was able to reach the Tibetan frontier and found the mission station of Bonga. All the attempts of Catholic missionaries to enter Tibet from the side of India were vain. In 1856 an Apostolic Vicar, Thomine-Desmazures, was appointed, but this effort was also unsuccessful. After a transient period of progress at the beginning of the sixties, the mission station was destroyed in 1865, the Christians were imprisoned, and all the missionaries were driven out of Tibet. After that time it was only possible to work on the eastern frontier in Chinese territory. But in 1887 even these frontier stations fell a prey to the power of the lamas, and could only be recommenced in 1895. In 1918 the Apostolic Vicariate of Tibet contained 3,744 Christians.

Recently various Protestants have been working on the eastern frontier; in Western or Lesser Tibet the Moravian missionaries have been carrying on heroic and sacrificial service at several centres since the middle of last century. In 1925, however, in consequence of insuperable difficulties, the station of Poo on the Sutlej, near the frontier of Greater Tibet, has had to be given up. The interior of Tibet has been closed to all missionary effort for many years, not only by order of the Tibetan, but of the British Government. The latter gave the Moravian missionaries permission to found their mission only on condition that they would limit their activity to the territory which is under British rule.

It is said that Indian Christians who have entered Greater Tibet either as traders or as ascetics have died as martyrs; this has been the fate also of natives who have confessed Christ. Sundar Singh tells of a fellow-countryman of his own, named Kartar Singh, who, like the Sâdhu, had had to leave his home on account of his faith in Christ, and who used to work as a wandering preacher of the Gospel. By command of the Lama of Tsingham he was sewn into the skin of a yak and thus put to death in the most cruel manner. The difficulties of carrying on missionary work in this remote closed land are perhaps greater than in any other country in Asia, possibly greater than in any other land in the world. Archbishop Renou (later Adviser to the *Propaganda fidei*), who knows, as few do, the indescribable difficulties of work in Tibet, wrote thus, sixty years ago, in prophetic vein:

"What immense difficulties the Gospel will have to overcome before it can take root in this land of Lamaism. Some quite extraordinary miracle will be needed in order to overturn this colossus of idol-worship, which is supported by every kind of diabolical device! How can we ever cope with these swarms of lamas who are mad with rage against everyone who does not belong to their form of worship? Great saints will be needed in order to open the way into this 'land of superstition *par excellence*.' My soul faints within me when I think of all the difficulties which have to be overcome, but the Divine power has no limits."

It was this most difficult of all mission fields that the young Christian convert chose for his special sphere. Without any support or special preparation, trusting only in the grace of God, and ready to lay down his life for the Gospel, he set out for this apparently impossible work. In the spring of 1908 he tried to enter the "closed" region of Greater Tibet by the same route which had been trodden by the Franciscan missionary, Desgodins, fifty years earlier. When he reached the Moravian mission station at Poo he found a cordial welcome and readiness to help him in every possible way from the two missionaries there, Kunick and Marx. They helped him to acquire the rudiments of the Tibetan language, and lent him an evangelist, Tarnyed Ali, as a companion. The two young men tramped over the mountains till they reached the lamasery of Trashisgang, where they were welcomed

very kindly. After that, Sundar Singh seems to have wandered about alone for a while in the land of *Bhod*; whether he ever succeeded at that time in actually getting into Tibet Proper cannot be ascertained. Every year the Sâdhu went up to the Himalayas and tried to cross the border. It is not clear how often, or in which year, he did manage to enter Greater Tibet; this uncertainty is due to the fact that the Sâdhu has never kept a diary, and also because the dates suggested by various witnesses contradict each other. It seems clear, however, that in the year 1912 Sundar Singh, accompanied by the above-mentioned evangelist, Tarnyed Ali of Poo, reached the village of Shipkyi, which is over the border. There he preached in his own language, and Ali interpreted for him. Further, it is known for a fact that he has repeatedly gone to Tibet by way of Almora. Yunas Singh, an agent of the London Missionary Society, met him in 1913 twice during his Tibetan journeys at Dewarahat, near Almora, and in 1917 at Dangoli. In 1917, while he was returning from Tibet and Nepal, he stayed at a place called Pitharagarh (quite close to the frontiers of Tibet and Nepal); this fact is vouched for by an Indian Christian worker belonging to the Methodist Mission. Miss Turner, of the London Missionary Society, also met him twice (in 1915 and 1917) in Dangoli, which lies north of Almora; and she received a letter from him just before and just after he had crossed the border into the "closed" region of Tibet. She remembered also that he passed through Almora in 1912 on his way into Tibet. Again and again he was prevented from actually crossing the frontier into Greater Tibet. In 1914, for instance, he was stopped by the British Government Officer at Gangtok in Sikkhim, together with his Tibetan companion, a man named Tharchin.

In 1919, when he was making for Tibet by way of Poo, he was turned back at the frontier. In 1923 the British authorities at Kotgarh prevented him from entering Tibet when his plan of going there was discovered by the false rumour of his death. Thus it is an historical fact that Sundar Singh has made great efforts every year (when he was not travelling in other countries) to enter Greater Tibet, and that he has achieved his object several times.

The Sâdhu's reception in Tibet was by no means always a hostile one ; on the contrary, he often met with friendliness and kindness. The fact that his yellow Sâdhu robe was like the garments of some of their lamas helped him to get a hearing for the Good News of the Gospel even in Tibet. In this inhospitable land, too, Sundar Singh found friends and helpers, like Wangdi and, above all, like Thapa, the young son of a Nepalese father and a Tibetan mother, who often served as his interpreter in Western Tibet. Both these youths were baptised by him. He encountered bitter hostility, it is true, particularly among the Tibetan lamas. He can tell stories of fierce persecution incurred by himself for the sake of his witness to Christ, as well as by other Christian evangelists and witnesses. He says that he was delivered several times over in a most wonderful manner from certain death. As these narratives are related by the Sâdhu alone, and it has been impossible to reach Thapa, the only eyewitness, the critical historian must leave this matter *in suspenso* in the meantime.

The most wonderful of these deliverances was the release from the well at Rasar. Whatever view we may take of this incident, and of others of the same character, the fact remains that travel in the pathless and inhospitable wilderness of mountains which makes

up the land of *Bhod* entails severe sacrifices and continual danger to life itself. Sundar Singh is right when he says : " When I go to Tibet I never expect to return. Each time I think it will be the last ; but it is the Will of God that I am preserved."

One of the most remarkable tales which the Sâdhu tells in connection with his travels in Tibet is that of the " Mahârishi of Kailâš." He says that he has met this old seer three times, and that he has received a good deal of inspiration from him, both for his own inner life and for his preaching of the Gospel. Here is the account of their first meeting :

Once when the Sâdhu was crossing the Kailâš Range in the Himalayas, he came upon the cave of an aged ascetic, in the midst of wonderful scenery, not far from the Lake of Manessarowar. He was used to finding Indian Sannyâsis and Tibetan monks in these mountain regions, but now, to his surprise, he found that this was a Christian hermit who asked him to kneel down and pray with him, whose prayer closed with the Name of Jesus, and who then read aloud to him some verses from the Sermon on the Mount from an ancient manuscript. Then the seer told him a wonderful story. He said that he had been born three hundred years before at Alexandria, of Moslem parents. At the age of thirty he had entered a Dervish Order, but neither prayer nor study of the Korân brought him any peace. In his inward distress he went to a Christian saint who had come from India to Alexandria in order to preach the Gospel. This saint was Yernaus (the Arabic form of Hieronymus), the nephew of St. Francis Xavier. This man read aloud to him these words out of a little book : " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." " God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." These words from the Bible led him to Christ. He left his monastery and was baptised, then he went out into the world as a wandering preacher, first of all with his teacher, and after that alone. After long years spent in missionary journeys he retired to the holy mountain of Kailâš to give himself up to meditation, prayer, and intercession for Christendom. In this solitary life of prayer wonderful apocalyptic visions and revelations had been granted him.

The Mahârishi's story, which the Sâdhu repeated in India, and which his biographer Zahir made public

(with several inaccuracies), is full of highly improbable statements. It is particularly striking that the words from the Bible which led the Mahârishi to Christ are the very same which helped the Sâdhu in his decision. The most obvious explanation, therefore, is that the Mahârishi is a Guru figure which has appeared to the Sâdhu in ecstasy, into whom the latter has involuntarily projected his own experiences. Professor Hauer of Marburg, who worked as a missionary in India for many years, told me that this *Mahârishi* and *Mahâtma* idea as a projection of one's own religious psyche in the fictitious form of a holy man is widespread among Indian ascetics. Two facts, however, militate against this illuminating explanation : first, that the Christian Mahârishi is known not only to the Sâdhu, but to the members of the Sannyâsi Mission ; some of them even consider him their "Pope," with whom they believe that they are in continual contact through telepathy. Further, an American mining engineer, who travelled a great deal in parts of the Himalayas never trodden by white men, spoke to his son before his death of the existence of mysterious ancient Christian hermits who lived among those mountains. More important, perhaps, is the statement of Daud Elia, a Christian of Annfield, who was present at the time when the Sâdhu arrived at the village directly after his meeting with the Mahârishi. At once he took several Christians from Dehra Dun with him on a return journey to the Kailâš mountains. Bad weather alone, which made the ways impassable with snow and ice, forced the pilgrims to return without having seen the Mahârishi. Sundar Singh points out that on one occasion he visited the Mahârishi with a Tibetan lama. Further, the strong probability of these actual meetings having taken place is shown by the fact that

Sundar Singh, in accordance with his own principle, "I am not called to proclaim the Mahârishi, but to preach Jesus Christ," has never spoken of the Mahârishi in public, and disapproves strongly of the curiosity and sensation-mongering spirit aroused by his story and, above all, by Zahir's book. The most decisive evidence for the actual existence of the Mahârishi, however, comes from the Rev. Yunas Singh. In the year 1916, at Gianame, a market town forty miles from Kailâš, he met some Tibetan traders who told him about a "very, very old Rishi" who lived high up in the Kailâš mountains not far from the region of perpetual snow.

Tibet is not the only country bordering on India which is entirely closed to Christian missions; in Nepal also—the stronghold of Mahâyâna Buddhism, with its thousands of temples—Christian missions have been unable to find a footing. Sundar Singh has also made several missionary journeys in this country, and here, too, he has been persecuted for his faith; here also he found frequent support from the secret Order of Christian Sannyâsis. It seems to be an established fact that, at the beginning of June 1914, he left Ghum, which is in the neighbourhood of Darjeeling, and went by way of Sukia into Nepal, and that for twenty-four hours he was imprisoned at the large village of Ilom, which is not far from the frontier. His Tibetan companion, Tharchin, whom he left at Ghum, and whom he met there immediately upon his return, confirms this absolutely. After he was set free he wrote these words in his New Testament:

"Nepal. 7 June, 1914. The Presence of Christ has turned my prison into a veritable heaven; what, then, will It do in Heaven itself?"

Without his knowledge, Mrs. Parker found these words in the Sâdhu's New Testament.

As Sundar Singh went to Ilom unaccompanied, we know no details about his sufferings there. The statement of the Nepal Government is non-committal and evasive. Sundar's Tibetan friend, Tharchin, whom he met immediately after his return from Ilom, says that the Sâdhu's body had a number of wounds, sores, and swellings, and that he had to do what he could to make them better. This fact confirms the actuality of the torture by leeches.

South India and the Far East

From the year 1912 the fame of the Sâdhu spread throughout the whole of India. The enthusiastic little book by his admirer Zahir, which appeared in Hindustani in 1916 and in English in 1917, made his name still further known both among Christians and Hindus. In the words of Dr. Macnicol, Sundar Singh went through India "like a magnet." Wherever he went Christians and non-Christians poured out to see him. In the beginning of 1918 Sundar came to Madras. It was his intention to set out once more for Tibet after a short rest in South India. But requests poured in on him to do evangelistic work in South India itself among the communities which were at that time deprived of the German missionaries on account of the war; so he stayed, and worked for some time in that region. Every morning and evening he preached to large gatherings; during the rest of the day he gave addresses in schools, and received visits from hundreds of Christians who turned to him for light and counsel. At night-time Hindus often came to see him secretly, as once Nicodemus came to Jesus of Nazareth. Everywhere he exhorted the Christians themselves to carry on the work which the European missionaries had begun, and not to allow it to fall to the ground. By a

delightful parable he tried to rouse them to a sense of their missionary vocation :

" Once there was a man who had a beautiful garden. The plants and the trees were well cared for, and all who went by were delighted with its appearance. Then the man had to go away for a time. ' But,' he thought to himself, ' my son is here, and he will keep it in order until I come back.' But the son did not bother himself at all about the matter, and no one looked after the garden. The gate was left open, and the neighbours' cows got in and ate up the carefully tended plants. No one watered the thirsty plants, and they soon began to wither. People used to stand and stare in wonder at the destruction that was being wrought. But the son loiled idly at the window. Then the passers-by asked why he was neglecting the garden like this. ' Oh,' he said, ' my father went away without telling me what to do.' You Indian Christians are just like this; your missionaries have gone away, and may not be back for a long time, and you look on and do not bestir yourselves. But if you wish to be true sons, then do your duty without a special command from your father."

Not only in the mission communities of South India did Sundar Singh try to awaken the missionary spirit, he turned his attention to the Syrian Church as well. These Christian communities claim their spiritual descent from the Apostle Thomas, who is said to have preached the Gospel in the neighbourhood of Cranagora. Whether this tradition is legendary or not, it is an established fact that this Church can trace its existence back to the third century in South India. In the fifth century they adopted Nestorian ideas and their bishops were consecrated by the Nestorian Patriarch. At the end of the sixteenth century Portuguese Jesuits succeeded in effecting a union with Rome, with the exception of a few groups who lived in the mountains. However, they soon became dissatisfied with the Latin hierarchy, and in 1653 the majority separated themselves from Rome and returned to Nestorianism.

At that juncture a Jacobite Patriarch succeeded in winning the allegiance of a certain number for the

Syrian-Jacobite Church, which is Monophysite in doctrine. These facts explain why to-day this Church is divided into three groups : the old Nestorian Church, the Syrian-Jacobite, and the Uniat [1] Church. In the middle of February 1918, Sundar Singh attended a great convention of the Syrian-Jacobite Church in North Travancore, at which twenty thousand believers were present, and at a large gathering he gave his testimony. From there he went on to the Congress of the Mar-Thomas Christians, which was held upon an island in the river near Trivandrum, and which was attended by thirty-two thousand Christians. Sundar Singh spoke to them quite frankly. He told them that they were indeed privileged to have been granted the precious treasure of the Gospel for so many centuries, but he urged them to consider seriously why the Good News of Christ had remained shut up for so long in this small part of India. On account of their neglect, God had been forced to send messengers from Europe and America ; strangers had to do the work which had been entrusted to them. With great earnestness the Sâdhu begged them to heed the Divine Call and to bring the light of the Gospel to the millions of their heathen fellow-countrymen.

At that moment, as Dr. Macnicol says, Sundar Singh " was at the height of his influence " ; he could have done anything he liked with the adoring crowds. To this period probably belongs that significant inward experience which he narrates at the beginning of his book, *At the Master's Feet.*

One day, when he went into the jungle to pray, a person came up to him whose manner and style implied a noble and devout nature, but there was cunning in his eye and something freezing in the tone of his voice.

[1] I.e. united with Rome ; it uses the Latin liturgy in the Syrian language and has indigenous bishops.

He spoke to him thus : " Pardon me for interrupting your solitude and devotions, but it is one's duty to seek the good of others ; hence I have come, for your pure and unselfish life has deeply impressed me. Many other God-fearing people have been similarly impressed. But though you have consecrated yourself heart and soul to the good of others, you have not yet been sufficiently rewarded. My meaning is this : by becoming a Christian your influence has affected some thousands of Christians, but it is limited to this, and even some of them regard you with distrust. Would it not be better for you as a Hindu or Mussulman to become their leader ? They are in search of such a leader. If you consent to my suggestion, you will soon see that millions of Hindus and Moslems in India will become your followers, and will actually worship you."

When Sundar Singh heard these words, involuntarily he replied : " Get thee hence, Satan ! All along I knew that thou wast a wolf in sheep's clothing. Thou desirest that I should renounce the narrow way of the Cross and life, and take the broad way of death. My reward is the Lord, who has given His life for me, and it is my bounden duty to sacrifice myself and all I am to Him, who is all to me. Depart, therefore, for I have nothing to do with thee." Then Sundar Singh wept much and prayed to God, and when he had finished his prayer he saw a glorious and beautiful Being clothed in light standing before him. He said nothing, and although the Sâdhu could not see very clearly for the tears in his eyes, such streams of love pierced his soul that he recognised his Lord, and he fell at His Feet and worshipped Him. Thus Sundar Singh overcame one of the greatest temptations of his life, the temptation to tamper with his vocation. In its essence the temptation consisted in this : why should he not become a great

Indian Guru, like Nânak, the founder of his own earlier faith, and thus be recognised and honoured by all, by Vedantists and Bhakta, by Vaishnava and Šaiva, by Sikhs and Moslems, the herald of a new syncretism of Hinduism and Islâm; and why should not Christianity, too, be included in a system which would give Jesus, like Mohammed and Buddha, a place among the chief *avatâra* of the great Saviour-Deity? But for Sundar Singh there was only one Saviour, Jesus Christ, who had so wonderfully changed him and called him, only one Gospel, the Good News of the Grace of Christ; for him Christ was indeed "all in all" . . . "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Until May 1918 the Sâdhu worked in South India, then he went to Ceylon for six weeks, the home of Hînayâna Buddhism and of the Pâli-Tipiṭakam, the Bible of the Hînayâna Buddhists. He held three meetings a day, and all were thronged by thousands of people: Catholic and Protestant Christians, Mohammedans, Hindus and Buddhists. Sundar Singh spoke severely to the Christians of Ceylon about their spirit of caste, wealth, and luxury, which he considered the greatest hindrance to the spread of the Gospel in that land. In Jaffna (in Ceylon) he experienced Roman Catholic hostility for the first time. The Roman priests forbade their adherents to attend the Sâdhu's meetings; there, too, he was for the first time suspected of being an impostor. In July 1918 he returned to South India, and then went North to Calcutta and on to Bombay, where he had an attack of influenza. "In this illness," he said, "God gave me rest and time for prayer which I could not get in the South." When he had recovered he went on a missionary tour to Burma and the Straits Settlements, and on, by way of Mandalay, Penang, and Singapore, to Japan, preaching the Gospel every-

where, and bearing witness to the great things God had done for him. In Penang, where there was a garrison of Sikh soldiers, he was even invited to give the message of Jesus Christ in a Sikh temple. In Singapore he used English in preaching ; up till that time, in South India and in Burma and Ceylon, he had used an interpreter. In Japan he was deeply distressed by the materialism love of wealth and display, immorality and religious indifference of the people. From Japan he travelled to China ; in both countries he preached to audiences composed of Japanese, Chinese, Europeans and Americans. Both in Japan and in China he was struck by the absence of a caste system, making it so much easier for converts to join the Christian Church than in India. Both among Japanese and Chinese Christians Sundar Singh made a deep and lasting impression.

The Sâdhu had scarcely reached his home in North India when he began to make ready for an evangelistic tour in Lesser Tibet (Spiti) ; he set out from Simla in July 1919, going by way of Subathu and Kotgarh ; on this trip he was accompanied by a Tibetan named Tarnyed Ali, who had already served him as an interpreter. When he returned home from this journey a great joy was given him. His father received him kindly, and asked him the way to Christ. The Sâdhu recommended him to read the Bible and to pray. His father did so, and after some time he said to his son : " I have found thy Saviour. He has become my Saviour too." He specially desired that his son should baptise him. " My spiritual eyes have been opened by thee," he said, " therefore I desire only to be baptised at thy hands." But Sundar Singh refused, as he had done to thousands of converts, because his commission, like that of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, did not consist in the administration of baptism but solely in the preaching

of the Gospel. "That is the task of others; I am called simply to witness to the blessedness of peace in Christ." His father paid the expenses of his journey to Europe, which had long been a desire of the Sâdhu.

(b) Missionary Journeys in the West

What was it that led the Sâdhu to leave his missionary work in India and the adjoining countries to go to the West? One reason was the accusation so often brought by strict Hindus against the West, that European Christianity had had its day and that now it had lost influence over the life of Western nations. He wished to find out for himself whether these charges were justified, for in his mission work they were a constant hindrance. The immediate reason, however, was, as always in the life of the Sâdhu, a special call from God. "One night while I was at prayer I received a call to preach in England." "In prayer God's Will became clear to me, and I knew I ought to visit the so-called Christian countries. I felt that there also I had to give my witness."

In February 1920 he arrived in Liverpool, and travelled via Manchester to Birmingham, where he spent some days among the Christian Colleges at Selly Oak.[1] Then he was the guest of the Cowley Fathers at Oxford, where he preached in several colleges and also at St. John's Church. In London he preached to great crowds of all kinds of denominations: in Anglican churches (St. Matthew's, Westminster, and St. Bride's, Fleet Street), among the Congregationalists at Westminster Chapel, and for the Baptists at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. At the Church House at Westminster he addressed a meeting of seven hundred Anglican clergymen, among whom were the Archbishop of Canterbury

[1] He stayed at Kingsmead, the Training Home of the Friends' Foreign Missionary Association.

and several bishops. He also spoke at Trinity College, Cambridge, and at various missionary meetings in London. He went over to Paris at the invitation of the Paris Missionary Society, and then went to Ireland and Scotland, where in Edinburgh and Glasgow he spoke in the leading Presbyterian churches.

In May, after three months of work in England, he went to America, where he gave his testimony in various ways at many of the great towns and cities like New York, Baltimore, Pittstone, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. He also took part in a great Student Conference. During his tour he took great pains to counteract the influence of various Hindu and Buddhist wandering preachers who had already gained a good many adherents in America to the religions of the Orient.

On the 30th of July he embarked for Australia. In Honolulu, where the steamer called, he addressed a curiously mixed audience, consisting of Hawaians, Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, English, and Americans. In Sydney, where he stayed for a week, he preached in the cathedral as well as in all kinds of churches, chapels, and lecture-rooms. In Melbourne he spoke in a Congregational church at a meeting presided over by an Anglican bishop, an unheard-of event hitherto—a welcome sign of the unifying and reconciling influence which the Sâdhu exercised among the various Christian communions. In other towns, like Perth, Adelaide, and Freemantle, the Christians arranged various united gatherings at which the Sâdhu preached.

On the 25th of September he landed at Bombay, and hastened at once to Subathu, at the foot of the Himalayas, in order to recover from his strenuous activities and to spend a quiet time in meditation and prayer. During the closing weeks of that year he once

more took up his apostolic work, and went preaching through the Punjab and Bengal.

In the spring of 1921 he went out again to his own special work in Tibet. After having spent so much of the previous year in travelling from city to city, surrounded by admiring crowds, he now wandered about in lonely and dangerous places, through the wilderness of the highlands of Tibet. The previous year he had proclaimed the message of the Gospel in crowded churches and meeting-houses of the West, now he proclaimed the same message in the dirty streets of Tibetan villages and towns.

After his return from Tibet once more he preached the Word of God in his native land. The following year he decided to accept the numerous invitations which he had received while in Europe, and which he had been unable to consider on his first visit to the West. With this second journey to Europe he wished to combine a visit to the Holy Land, and thus to fulfil his long-cherished desire to visit the Holy Places connected with the Master he loved. His father, wishing to give him pleasure, again gave him the money for the journey. On the 29th of January he embarked and went to Port Said, whence he went straight on to Palestine. There he visited all the places connected with the life of our Lord: Jerusalem (where he preached in the Anglican Cathedral), Emmaus, Bethany, Jericho, the Dead Sea, the Jordan (in which he bathed), Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramah, Bethel, Nazareth, Tiberias, Magdala, Capernaum, and the Lake of Galilee.

For him it was an overwhelming thought that here, in these actual places, his Lord had lived and suffered and revealed Himself as the Risen Lord. Here he found his "practical commentary on the Gospels." The whole of the Saviour's Life, the great drama of Redemption

in all its phases, became a living reality to this Indian Christian disciple ; at every step the sense of His immediate, personal Presence filled his consciousness. " He is with me wherever I go ; He walks at my right hand." His soul overflowed with joy, and tears of thankfulness were often in his eyes. When he stood in the Temple area he seemed to hear Christ saying : " I am come that ye may have life, and that ye may have it more abundantly." And when he knelt and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, it seemed as though Jesus were standing by him saying, as He said to His disciples long ago : " Peace be with you. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And when he rose from prayer he knew that he also, like the apostles of old, had been sent to bear witness to the whole world.

From Palestine Sundar Singh went to Cairo, where he preached in Coptic churches as well as to the foreign community. A week later he reached Marseilles, preached there, and then went on to Switzerland. He spoke in numerous Reformed churches in Lausanne, Geneva, Neuchâtel, Berne, Thun, Basle, Zurich, St. Gall, and other places. At Tavannes he spoke in the open air to three thousand people. In Neuchâtel it is estimated that ten thousand people came to hear him. In Geneva he bore witness to the Living Christ in the hall in which the League of Nations meets. When he first entered this remarkable place he said : " The League of Nations has made great efforts, but it will achieve nothing until there is a league of human hearts, and such a league is only possible when men give their hearts to Him who is the Master of all hearts. In Him alone is true peace." In addition, he spoke often to smaller groups of Swiss pastors and theological professors.

The Sâdhu did not stay long in Germany, where

he visited the towns of Halle, Leipzig, Berlin, Hamburg, and Kiel ; in Leipzig and in Kiel he also spoke at the University. It is interesting to note that he went to Wittenberg, and that he, whose simple spirit is so closely connected with that of the German reformer, should have preached in the same church as the latter. He speaks of this visit in a letter to his biographer, Mrs. Parker :

"Yesterday I reached Wittenberg, the cradle of the Reformation. I have seen the house in which Martin Luther lived and the church in which he used to preach. It was on the door of this church that he nailed the ninety-five theses of the Reformation, and in that church he was buried. To-night I am to speak in this church."

From Germany Sundar Singh travelled to Sweden, where he spoke to very sympathetic audiences in many towns and smaller places. At Stockholm he was the guest of Prince Oscar Bernadotte, to whom he became much attached on account of the vitality and freshness of his faith. In writing of this visit to a European prince, he added these significant words : "But I live always with the Prince of Peace." In Upsala he spent several days with Archbishop Söderblom ; at the University he gave an address on Hinduism, and in the cathedral he spoke on prayer, the Archbishop himself serving as his interpreter.

From Sweden he went to Norway, where he visited several towns and villages, and then went on to Denmark. At Copenhagen he visited the former Russian Empress at the Royal Palace. When he was leaving she asked him to bless her, but he refused gently, saying : "I am not worthy to bless anyone, for these hands of mine have torn up the Holy Scriptures ; Christ's pierced Hands alone can bless you and others."

In Herning and Tinglev he spoke to immense audiences

which reminded him of the gatherings of the Syrian Church in South India.

At the beginning of June he travelled to Holland by way of Hamburg ; during his stay in that country, Baron van Boetzelaer accompanied him. He spoke at Groningen, Rotterdam, The Hague, Amsterdam, Utrecht, and other towns. Baron van Boetzelaer also arranged a meeting for him with well-known men who were prominent in the spheres of politics, learning, and theology.

In July the Sâdhu arrived in England, quite exhausted by his labours. He had already refused pressing invitations to visit Finland, Russia, Greece, Rumania, Serbia, Italy, Portugal, America, and New Zealand, and now he resisted all attempts to make him speak in England. The only exception he made was in favour of a "Keswick" gathering in South Wales, where he spoke in order to keep a promise made long before. His one desire was for rest and quietness for body and soul. That was not really possible until he reached his native hills in the month of August. There, in complete seclusion from the world, he renewed his strength for his apostolic labours. During the last months of that year he was able once more to proclaim the Gospel in his own language in North India.

Sundar Singh's visit to Europe was regarded everywhere as an event of the first importance. Many Indians had visited Europe of recent years, the most noteworthy being Rabindranath Tagore, the son of a yet greater father, the Mahârishi Devendranath Tagore, and one of the leaders of present-day India. These all brought the message of India's religious wisdom to the intellectual world of the West ; and when they talked of a synthesis of Indian and Western culture, they were never weary of extolling the religious treasures of their native land,

above all, the Upanishads, and of exhorting their Western hearers to study them. Even Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâyâ, the Christian ascetic, in his English addresses, used to praise the Indian caste system as an ideal social system, and the philosophy of the Vedanta as the *philosophia perennis*, as the ideal foundation for the doctrines of the Christian revelation. Vasvani, the Bombay professor, gave a wonderful address at the "World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress," which was held in Berlin in 1910, on "The Message of Modern India to the West."

"Present-day India has a message for the world. The services which the West has rendered to India are well known; but it is little realised that India also has something to offer to the West: it gives access to sources of inspiration which the world needs to-day." "I have proclaimed my message, the message of modern India, which is also the message of the *Brâhma Samâj*: the threefold message of immediate union with the self-revealing spirit, of the synthesis of world religions which unites Yoga or subjective discipleship with the teaching of all great prophets, and of the brotherhood of humanity which is to be regarded as the Son of God." And his message closed with these prophetic words: "The West will turn reverently to the East in order to learn its ancient wisdom, to develop its mystical sense, to see in Nature not merely a field of scientific research, but a sanctuary of the spirit, to practise meditation, to learn the spirit of idealism, and in order to find the Presence of God in social life."

Thus from the lips of a thoughtful Indian we hear the same warning which had been uttered long before his time by great German thinkers, by Schopenhauer and Humboldt, Richard Wagner and Paul Deussen. But now an Indian comes to the West who does not praise the sacred writings of his own country, who, on the contrary, confesses that these scriptures could not give him peace; an Indian who proclaims with all possible earnestness and exclusiveness that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that "in Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily," that the New Testa-

ment is the Word of God, and that prayer is the way to enter heaven. That an Indian, a religious man from the land of the Vedas, had nothing to proclaim to the West save the simple message of the revelation of God in Christ—this was an unheard-of thing. It was no wonder that the educated classes in Europe received this man with the greatest astonishment. Certainly, the great interest which he awakened was very largely due to curiosity, which was sometimes worked up by an unworthy kind of publicity ; but this curiosity was, as a Swedish lady expresses it, " mixed with a certain childlike desire to see for once in one's life what a man looked like who, both outwardly and inwardly, resembled a character in the Bible."

The impression which the Sâdhu made upon his hearers, as well as upon those who came into closer touch with him in Europe, was very deep. When he preached in St. Bride's Church in London, at the close " almost everyone in the congregation knelt down and prayed, a thing which was quite unusual in such meetings." Everyone felt, as the *Church Times* expressed it, that " a man from another world was speaking to them." Men and women of the most varied professions, classes, and countries agreed in testifying to the deep impression made upon them both by his appearance and by his words. An English theologian writes : " I cannot say here, as I would like to do, what I feel—I have the impression of an outstanding man, who has renounced great possessions, exulting in the saving power of his Master, and one who speaks with the utmost simplicity." A Dutch theologian writes in a private letter : " It was a revelation to me, and seeing him has made the world of the New Testament more living and real." A Swedish friend wrote to the author : " It was indeed a great experience. I bowed my spirit

before the great apostle because I no longer saw him, but only God, whom he proclaimed." A Swiss pastor says in a letter to the present writer : " He has made a very strong impression upon me—I may indeed say, the strongest impression I have ever received in my life." And a simple peasant from the Swiss Alps, who had heard the Sâdhu in the cathedral at Lausanne, said afterwards : " I was in the cathedral. That day was a day to be remembered all my life. I was happy in the midst of my fellow-countrymen with this brother who had come from a heathen country and who stood in the pulpit."

Countless Western theologians, who met him first with a certain reserve and mistrust, lost all their misgivings at the first encounter. Even learned men who were hostile or indifferent to Christianity were changed by the power of his personality. A professor of an English university, who had been an agnostic, said to the Sâdhu : " It is not your preaching which has converted me, it is yourself ; you, an Indian, are so like Christ in spirit and in bearing ; you are a living witness to the Gospel and to the Person of Jesus Christ."

In thousands of Christian hearts in Europe Sundar Singh has left an indelible impression ; for thousands his preaching has meant a spur to a renewed Christian life. To him, however, as to Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâyâ twenty years before, his visit to Western lands brought bitter disappointment ; he came to realise that the idealistic notions which he had held about Western Christians were not founded on fact, and that his Hindu opponents were right when they spoke of the decadence of Western Christianity and of the superiority of Indian inwardness and spiritual culture. (14). The pain which this unexpected experience brought him appears in his addresses again and again.

"I used to think that the inhabitants of these countries were all wonderful people; when I saw the Love of God in their hearts and what they do for us, I thought they must be living Christians. But when I travelled through these lands I altered my opinion. I found things quite otherwise. Without doubt there are true servants of God in these countries, but not all are Christians. I began to compare the inhabitants of heathen lands with those of Christendom. The former are heathen because they worship idols made with hands; in the so-called Christian lands, however, I found a worse kind of heathenism; people worship themselves. Many of them go to the theatre instead of praying and reading the Word of God; they give way to drink and to all kinds of sins. I began to realise that no European country can be called really Christian, but that there are individual Christians."

But this painful disillusion could not shake the Sâdhu's faith in Christ. He did not blame Christianity for the irreligion and immorality of the West, much less did he dream of returning to his former religion on account of this deterioration.

"Christ is not to be blamed in this matter; there is no fault in Him; the blame belongs to those who say they are His followers, and who will not follow Him as their Leader." "Our Lord lived in Palestine for three-and-thirty years, but Palestine, as such, did not become a Christian country; some individuals followed Him, later they witnessed for Him, and had to lay down their lives in martyrdom. The same kind of thing is happening to-day."

He often used a vivid parable in order to show that the religious and moral condition of Christendom was not due to the Christian religion.

"One day when I was in the Himalayas, I was sitting upon the bank of a river; I drew out of the water a beautiful, hard, round stone and smashed it. The inside was quite dry. The stone had been lying a long time in the water, but the water had not penetrated the stone. It is just like that with the people of Europe; for centuries they have been surrounded by Christianity, they are entirely steeped in its blessings, they live in Christianity; yet Christianity has not penetrated them, and it does not live in them. Christianity is not at fault; the reason lies rather in the hardness of their hearts. Materialism and intellectualism have made their hearts hard. So I am not surprised that many people here do not understand what Christianity really is."

His travels in the West were not only a great disappointment to him, they were a great danger. Whereas at one time he had suffered shame and pain for his Christian faith, now he received the plaudits of thousands. He was often honoured as a saint ; in England and in America a regular " Sâdhu cult " was carried on. To receive such honour in one's lifetime is dangerous for any Christian ; it was doubly so for a convert, and still more for an Indian—one has only to remember how a Guru may be deified ; how much more dangerous was it then for an Indian to receive such honours from Europeans ! Many of the Sâdhu's friends watched his triumphal progress through the countries of Europe with grave misgiving. Once more Satan appeared to him in treacherous guise ; it was perhaps the severest temptation of his whole life. To be universally acclaimed as a saint was a far greater assault on his faith than the suggestions of his relatives or the pleadings of his father, than hunger or nakedness, or even than the temptation to become an Indian Guru. The danger lay in this : that he might slip into accepting the honour which belonged to Christ alone for himself, and thus seat himself upon the throne which belonged to his Lord and Master. But Sundar Singh overcame this temptation also ; his deep humility remained unscathed. Dr. Weitbrecht-Stanton, who had known him as a young evangelist in India, writes : " I was astonished at the natural and unassuming way in which he met the often extravagant praises and honours which were heaped upon him. He remained the same humble religious soul, whose only desire was to come nearer and nearer to the Lord, and to grow more and more like Him, who longed to wear himself out in His service." All the accounts of eyewitnesses agree in laying stress upon the unobtrusive modesty and genuine humility of the

Sâdhu. Here is the opinion of a Swiss clergyman : " He does not want to make an impression ; rather he tries to evade being made much of by people." Again and again the Sâdhu said in his addresses that he desired to be nothing more than a simple witness to the power of the Love of Christ. " I often say to my hearers that I did not come to the West to give lectures or to preach, but simply in order to give my own small testimony." " It is not for preaching that I have come to Europe—you have enough sermons over here—but in order to witness to the saving power of God in Christ." When he speaks of his own wonderful experiences it is always with the thought of " exulting in Christ." When a friend asked him if he were not proud to have become so famous and to receive so much honour, he replied by a beautiful parable :

" When Jesus entered Jerusalem the people spread their clothes in the way and strewed branches before Him in order to do Him honour. Jesus rode upon an ass, according to the word of the prophet. His feet did not touch the road which was decorated in His honour. It was the ass which trod upon the garments and the branches. But the ass would have been very foolish to have been uplifted on that account ; for the road really was not decked in its honour ! It would be just as foolish if those who bear Christ to men were to think anything of themselves because of what men do to them for the sake of Jesus."

While Sundar Singh preserved his attitude of simple humility in the midst of an admiring world, he did not shrink from outspoken criticism of Western conditions. He never hesitated to express his disappointment with the un-Christian spirit of the West, nor to speak severely about the religious indifference, greed of mammon, and love of pleasure shown by Western peoples. In an address in Western Switzerland he said : " I know that what I am saying to you will not please you, but I must obey my conscience and give you the message

which I have received from God." The longer the Sâdhu remained in Europe, the more did his preaching become a prophetic message of judgment and a call to repentance.

"I used to think that the inhabitants of Western lands read the Bible, and that they were like angels. But when I travelled through these countries I saw my error. Most of them have white faces and black hearts. In heathen lands I see the people going to their temples; they are God-fearing folk. Here I see everywhere people who seem to think about nothing but pleasure." "In heathen lands there are people who spend years seeking peace and salvation; here there are many who seem to be satisfied with material comfort."

"Because the so-called Christian lands, to such a large extent, are falling away from Christ, He is beginning to reveal Himself to heathen peoples, where He is being welcomed and honoured. Here, too, the word is fulfilled: 'The first shall be last and the last first.'"

At times his message becomes a veritable prophecy of judgment in the eschatological sense:

"The people of the West who have received so many blessings from Christianity are losing them now because they put their trust in outward things: comfort, money, luxury, and the things of this world. Therefore, on that day, non-Christians will receive a lighter sentence because they have not heard of Christ; but the inhabitants of Christian lands will be punished more severely because they have heard His message and they have rejected it." "The time is near when Christ will return again with His angels, and then He will turn to the so-called Christians and say to them: 'I know you not; you knew My Name; you knew who I was. You knew My Life and My Work. But you did not wish to know Me personally. I know you not.'" "When you see Him in His glory, then you will grieve that you did not believe in Him as your God. But then it will be too late. You have allowed yourselves to be led astray by unbelievers, by intellectual men who said you should not believe in His Divinity. Repentance will then be too late. Now, however, is your opportunity. Perhaps on that day you will hear it said: 'A man came to you from a heathen land; he bore witness to Me as the Living Christ, because he had experienced My power and My glory, and yet you would not believe.'"

The bitter disappointment with the West turned the Sâdhu, this messenger of the Love of God and of

His heavenly peace, into a severe preacher of judgment. When he had delivered his message, he shook off the dust of Europe from his feet and returned to his native land, with the firm resolve never to go back to the West. "This is the first and the last time that you will ever see me," he said to his hearers over and over again. He recognised that Western peoples—to a large extent because they were entangled by greed of gain and love of pleasure—were rejecting the message of Christ, while the people of the East, desiring truth and salvation, were receiving the Gospel with joy. (15) To carry the Good News to these people he regards as his future task in life. For that reason, soon after his return he again took up the painful, laborious work of missionary tours in Tibet.[1] He is drawn thither, not only by its attraction as a mission field, but by the hope of martyrdom. In an address he gave in Switzerland he said :

"I feel no fear at the thought of one day dying in Tibet. When that day comes I shall welcome it with joy." "Each year I go back to Tibet, and perhaps even next year you will hear that I have lost my life there. Do not then think 'He is dead,' but say: 'He has entered Heaven and Eternal Life; he is with Christ in the perfect life.'"

[1] In 1923 and 1924 he did not succeed in entering Tibet.

Part III

SUNDAR SINGH'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

A. VITA CONTEMPLATIVA

1. Prayer

THE story of the Sâdhu's life reads like some wonderful legend, similar in kind to those which occur so frequently in the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Roman Church or in the Hindu *Bhaktamala*.

If the hero of this story were not still living among us, and if this account of his life were not based upon the evidence of a thoroughly trustworthy witness, whose accuracy can be proved almost up to the hilt, the critical intellect of the West would relegate it, without further ado, to the realm of the unhistorical, and the literary critic would bring it forward as an example of the recurrence of the primitive type of legend. As we read the Sâdhu's life we realise that we are in the presence of sober, historic fact : we are confronted by a man of our own day who lives entirely in the Eternal, and who is in the closest communion with his Saviour ; a man, too, who experiences "miracles" in this life of communion, and who is able to work "miracles" in its power.

The miraculous element is indeed woven into the very texture of the life of Sundar Singh. It does not matter where we look, whether at his conversion to Christ or at his ecstasies and visions, at his self-denying and exhausting life as an itinerant preacher or at his deliverances from deadly peril, at every turn we are made conscious of marvellous, supernatural power. This wonderful power is his life of prayer. "Through men

of prayer God can do great things" is one of his own sayings. Sundar Singh's secret is that of all true men of God ; continual communion, through prayer, with Eternal Reality. Prayer is the world in which he lives and moves. It is the source of all his piety ; of his strong and deep love to Christ, of his readiness to sacrifice all ; of his consuming apostolic zeal. He himself says : "Prayer alone has taught me all that I have ever learnt."

Every morning he spends several hours in Bible-study, meditation, and prayer. (16) When he is staying in the Himalayas, he follows his Master's example by dedicating whole days and nights to solitary prayer ; knowing by experience that prayer is the "bread of life," he constantly insists on the necessity of prayer in all his preaching. "Prayer, prayer, and again prayer," is Sundar's motto. Western Christians were much astonished that "he gave such a high place to prayer." Even the author of this book, who has made a special study of the subject of Christian prayer, was surprised to find such a constant and decided emphasis on prayer in all the Sâdhu's sermons. Sundar Singh never tires of pointing out that prayer is the heart of religion, the Alpha and Omega of the Christian life. "Prayer is the greatest necessity of our spiritual life." "When we pray, everything that we need in this life is already granted, so far as the needs of our spiritual life are concerned." In order to press home the absolute necessity of prayer, the Sâdhu often uses the symbol of breathing, a figure of speech often used also in the religious language of the West.

"In prayer the soul opens up every avenue to the Holy Spirit. God then gently breathes into it that it may become a living soul." "He who has ceased to breathe in prayer is spiritually dead." "Prayer is the

breath of the spiritual life . . . prayer means the inhaling the breath of the Holy Spirit."

Sundar Singh develops this thought still further in one of his own vivid parables :

"The truth is that we cannot live a single day, nor indeed a single hour, without God. 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' But most of us are like people who are asleep, who breathe without being conscious of it. If there were no air around them, and they ceased to breathe, they would be neither asleep nor awake—they would die of suffocation. As a rule, however, men never think about the absolutely indispensable gift of the air we breathe. But if we do reflect upon it we are filled with thankfulness and joy. Our spiritual dependence upon God is something very like that. He sustains us ; we live in Him. Yet how many of us ever think about it? How many souls there are who really wake from slumber and begin to breathe in the Divine air, without which, if it were to be withdrawn, the soul would die of suffocation ! What kind of breathing, then, is this ? The breath of the soul is prayer, through which fresh currents of air sweep into our being, bringing with them fresh supplies of vital force from the Love of God, on whom our whole life depends." "All life comes from God, but most people never think about this at all ; they are quite unconscious of their spiritual life. It is only when a man begins to pray that he becomes conscious of this relationship. Then he begins to think, and realises how wonderful it is to live in God."

"Once I was sitting upon the shore of a lake. As I sat there I noticed some fish who came up to the surface and opened their mouths. At first I thought they were hungry and that they were looking for insects, but a fisherman told me afterwards that although they can breathe quite well under water they have to come up to the surface every now and again to inhale deep draughts of fresh air, or they would die. It is the same with us. The world is like an ocean ; we can live in it, carry on our work and all our varied occupations, but from time to time we need to receive fresh life through prayer. Those Christians who do not set apart quiet times for prayer have not yet found their true life in Christ. . . ."

In another beautiful metaphor, which the Sâdhu uses with true Oriental simplicity, he expresses his conviction of the absolute necessity of prayer :

"God has created both the mother's milk and the child's desire to drink it. But the milk does not flow of itself into the child's mouth. No, the child must lie in its mother's bosom and suck the milk diligently.

God has created the spiritual food which we need. He has filled the soul of man with desire for this food, with an impulse to cry out for it and to drink it in. The spiritual milk, the nourishment of our souls, we receive through prayer. By means of fervent prayer we must receive it into our souls. As we do this we become stronger day by day, just like the infant at the breast."

"Prayer is both the air we breathe and the mother's milk of the soul. Without prayer it is impossible to receive supernatural gifts from God."

"Prayer is the necessary preparation for receiving spiritual gifts from God." "Only longing and prayer make room for God in our hearts." "God cannot give us spiritual gifts excepting through prayer." "It is only as we are immersed in the spiritual world that we can understand spiritual things."

"There are beautiful birds in the air, and twinkling stars in the heavens, but if you desire pearls you must plunge down into the depths of the ocean to find them. There are many beautiful things in the world around us, but pearls can only be discovered in the depths of the sea; if we wish to possess spiritual pearls we must plunge into the depths; that is, we must pray, we must sink down into the secret depths of contemplation and prayer. Then we shall perceive precious pearls."

"When we are in the dark we know through our sense of touch what kind of object we are holding in our hands, whether it is a stick or a snake. Both can be felt in the darkness, but we can see them only in the light. So long as we are not in the light we grope and tumble about, and we cannot see true reality. The man who does not believe in Divine Light is still in darkness. What then shall we do to come to the Light? We must step out of the darkness and approach the Light; that is, we must kneel before our Saviour and pray to Him fervently. Then we shall be bathed in His Light, and we shall see everything clearly. . . . Prayer is the key which opens the door of Divine Reality. Prayer leads us out of that darkness in which, in spite of all our intelligence and power of vision, we cannot perceive the Light of Truth. . . . Prayer leads us into the world of spiritual light."

So prayer is "the only way to understand spiritual things," "the only way of discovering truth," the only "key to the Gate of Heaven," "the key of the Kingdom of God." The man of prayer rises above the world of sense, and perceives the higher world, the only true and perfect Reality, the "Reality of Reality" (*satyasya satyam*), to use the mysterious language of the Upanishads. It is only to the praying soul that the spiritual life becomes a reality.

But in Sundar Singh's experience prayer does much more than this : not only does it " open the door of spiritual reality," it reveals this Reality to the believing heart as self-giving, strengthening, ennobling, redeeming Love. God reveals Himself to the praying soul as a personal Saviour and Redeemer. Not only does the soul contemplate the Divine Being as an infinite Ocean or as a sea of flame and fire, it gazes upon a loving human face ; the God who reveals Himself in prayer is not the *Deus absconditus*, but the *Deus revelatus*. When Sundar Singh strove with God on the memorable night of his conversion, he looked into the human face of Jesus and saw that He was God. And as he then beheld Jesus with his bodily eyes, so he contemplates Him ever afresh in prayer. (17)

The deepest mysteries of the Christian Faith, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, His Resurrection and His Exaltation, become clear to the soul that prays. In prayer the Christian experiences the actual presence of the Glorified Son of God ; prayer is the key to faith in the Divinity of Christ. That which no intellectual labour, no study of the Scriptures, and no theological apologetic can achieve, is won by believing prayer. " We learn much about Jesus in the Bible," says Sundar Singh, " but we only learn to know *Him* through prayer. That is my own experience. I did not understand that He was truly God until He revealed Himself to me in prayer. Then I understood that He is the Eternal Word." From the standpoint of personal experience, then, the Sâdhu never tires of declaring that there is no other way to personal faith in Christ than the way of inward prayer. When his father asked him how he could learn to know Christ, Sundar Singh replied : If you want to know who Christ is, read the Bible ; but if you want to learn to know Him per-

sonally, then you must pray. Bible-reading is not enough. . . ."

He expresses the same thought in all his public utterances.

"Through prayer, by the simple method of prayer, we become aware of Christ's Presence and learn to know Him." "You must go into the stillness and pray to Christ in solitude; there you will hear the Voice of Him who alone can help you." "If you read His Word and pray to Him even only for half an hour every day, you will have the same experience. He will reveal Himself to your souls." "I am sure that He will reveal Himself to you in prayer; then you will know Him as He is. And He will not only reveal Himself to you, but He will come and give you strength and joy and peace."

"Strength, joy, peace"—these are the wonderful effects which Christ leaves in the soul that prays. "I prayed, and peace that passes all understanding filled my heart."

But what kind of prayer is this of whose strange power the Sâdhu never tires of speaking? Is it a childlike cry for help in the varying difficulties of life, the simple request for all that we need in daily life? Or is it the concentration of prolonged meditation and quiet peaceful introversion, in which the soul rests undisturbed for a long time with the whole world shut out? Is Sundar Singh's conception the same as that longing for happiness expressed by the Vedic poets, or is it akin to the holy *samâdhi* of the Brahmans, or the peaceful *dhyânam* of the Buddhist mendicant friars? The prayer of the Sâdhu stands midway between these two extremes; it is neither the naïve prayer of petition for earthly needs nor is it ingenious barren meditation. Again and again he impresses upon his hearers that prayer is something quite different from mere petition for personal needs:

"The essence of prayer does not consist in asking God for something but in opening our hearts to God, in speaking with Him, and living with Him in perpetual communion. Prayer is continual abandonment to

God." "Prayer does not mean asking God for all kinds of things we want; it is rather the desire for God Himself, the only Giver of Life." "Prayer is not asking, but union with God." "Prayer is not a painful effort to gain from God help in the varying needs of our lives. Prayer is the desire to possess God Himself, the Source of all life." "The true spirit of prayer does not consist in asking for blessings, but in receiving Him who is the giver of all blessing, and in living a life of fellowship with Him." "Prayer is not a kind of begging for favours; it is rather breathing and living in God." "A little child often runs to its mother and exclaims: 'Mother! Mother!' Very often the child does not want anything in particular; he only wants to be near his mother, to sit upon her lap, or to follow her about the house, for the sheer pleasure of being near her, talking to her, hearing her dear voice. Then the child is happy. His happiness does not consist in asking and receiving all kinds of things from his mother. If that were what he wanted, he would be impatient and obstinate and therefore unhappy. No; his happiness lies in feeling his mother's love and care, and in knowing the joy of her mother-love." "It is just the same with the true children of God; they do not trouble themselves so much about spiritual blessings. They only want to sit at the Lord's feet, to be in living touch with Him, and when they do that they are supremely content."

In another parable Sundar Singh tries to show how mean and contemptible a thing it is to beg for all kinds of everyday things when one is in the Presence of the greatness and wonder of God: "Have you ever seen a heron standing motionless on the shore of a lake? From his attitude you might think he was standing gazing at God's Power and Glory, wondering at the great expanse of water, and at its power to cleanse and satisfy the thirst of living creatures. But the heron has no such thoughts in his head at all; he stands there hour after hour, simply in order to see whether he can catch a frog or a little fish. Many human beings behave like that in prayer and meditation. They sit on the shore of God's Ocean; but they give no thought to His Power and Love, they pay no attention to His Spirit which can cleanse them from their sins, neither do they consider His Being which can satisfy their soul's thirst; they give themselves up entirely to the thought of how they can gain something that will please them, something that will help them to enjoy the transitory pleasures of this world, and so they turn their faces away from the clear waters of spiritual peace. They give themselves up to the things of this world which pass away, and they perish with them."

Thus we see that, for the Sâdhu, prayer is not a request for either definite earthly blessings or spiritual blessings; it is communion with God, intercourse with

Him. Yet this kind of prayer does not exclude childlike petition. But the object of this petition (as indeed the Sâdhu most earnestly recommends and practises in intercession) is nothing less than God Himself. God Himself, then, is our desire, the Source of all blessing and the Giver of all gifts ; and we must pray that " God's Will be done through me, and through others." " The only possible prayer for a Christian is : ' Thy Will be done,' for he who finds God, and becomes conformed to His Will, finds fullness of life and joy ; he does not need to ask for anything else." " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee "—these words are the key to all the Sâdhu's teaching on prayer.

Although the Sâdhu considers the desire for God Himself as the only real prayer, yet he sees a certain value in naïve childlike requests for earthly and heavenly blessings ; he looks upon this stage as a preparation for true prayer. The soul comes to God with childlike, yes, even with foolish desires ; but the Presence of God gradually changes his heart ; at last he forgets his own desires and gives himself up wholly to the Will of God. Or perhaps God refuses to answer the limited prayer of a soul that it may learn to ask for something greater, for His Grace and Love, for Himself. When a soul has once entered into living communion with God—even if some quite external cause has led him to it—he discovers, to his astonishment and joy, that he has found something greater and happier than he ever expected.

" Sometimes people ask me this question : ' If God does not wish us to ask for material things, but for Himself, the Giver of all good, why does the Bible never say : Do not pray for this or that—pray simply for the Holy Spirit ? Why has this never been clearly expressed ? ' I reply, Because He knew that people would never begin to pray if they

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could not ask for earthly things like riches and health and honours; He says to Himself: If they ask for such things the desire for something better will awaken in them, and finally they will only care about the higher things."

"The heat and the sun's rays, falling upon salt water, cause evaporation, which gradually becomes condensed into clouds, which again descend in the form of sweet, fresh water. The salt, and all the other things in the water, are left behind. In the same way the thoughts and desires of the praying soul rise to heaven like clouds; then the Sun of Righteousness cleanses them from the taint of sin by His purifying rays. The prayer then becomes a great cloud which falls in showers of blessing, life, and strength upon the earth below."

Sundar Singh regards union with God as the sole aim of true prayer; he therefore rejects with vigour all attempts to explain prayer as the endeavour to change the mind of God. Prayer is not a means of winning God to the side of man; rather, it should serve to win man to God. In prayer we learn to know the Will of God and to surrender ourselves humbly to it.

"There are people who pray as though we could alter God's Purpose. For a long time this question exercised me deeply. I received an answer in my own experience. We cannot alter God's plan, but in prayer we can learn to understand His Will for us. When we pray in some quiet place God speaks to us in the silence of our own heart." "Then He reveals to us His designs for our good; when we begin to understand His purposes we do not even wish to alter them; we only want to co-operate with them. When we understand His plans for us He gives us strength to live in harmony with His Will. It is quite possible that His Purpose includes suffering, want, or sickness, but in all these things we find our consolation in saying 'Thy Will be done.' God's purposes work out for our highest good. Once we have realised that, all self-pity goes . . . all murmuring and doubt disappear as if by magic."

Although the idea of working any change in God's Purpose is unbearable to Sundar Singh, yet he speaks of miracles which can be worked by means of prayer. Christ said to him: "That which is impossible to any human being becomes possible through prayer. My servants experience miracles in their own lives which the wise in this world declare to be wholly contrary to sound reason and the laws of Nature." The miracles to which the Sâdhu here refers are in the first place the miracles which God works in the praying soul; the greatest of these inward miracles is the deep peace which God bestows upon the tortured and

despairing heart. "Through prayer we experience the greatest of all miracles, heaven upon earth."

Such miracles also are worked through the power of persistent intercession: "There are times when one can do more good by prayer than by preaching. A man who prays incessantly in a solitary cave can help other people a great deal. An influence goes out from him which actually pervades the spiritual atmosphere, even though this influence is exerted in great stillness, unperceived by men, just as wireless messages are conveyed by unseen waves, and as the words which we speak penetrate the consciousness of other people through mysterious channels of communication."

Sundar Singh's conception of prayer is something far higher than the naïve ideas of many Christians. At the same time he never loses himself in that barren meditation and self-absorption practised by so many holy Brahmans and Buddhists, and even by some Christian mystics. It is true that he values the method of meditation—that reflective brooding *dhyânam*—practised by Yogis and Buddhists, the *oración di recogimento*, as the Spanish mystics call it. He begins every season of prayer with meditation upon a passage of Scripture. In his experience he finds that this concentrated attention upon some definite religious truth is like the focus of a magnifying glass placed upon a piece of material. At the same time his prayer is chiefly contemplative, taking the form of silent *oratio mentalis*. "I use no words when I pray alone," "the speech of prayer is without words." His prayer differs, nevertheless, from the formless contemplation of many mystics by his use of the word "Thou," by his sense of immediate contact with a personal God through a strong personal relationship with God, which is like that which obtains between friends—"men of prayer speak with God as a man talks with his friend." The Sâdhu draws a clear distinction between the method of meditation, with which he was familiar in Hinduism, and Christian prayer. That which meditation and contemplation could not give him he has

found in the simplicity of Christian prayer : peace of heart.

" As long as I was a Hindu I spent hours in meditation every day." " That may have helped me to cultivate my spiritual faculties, but I did not understand spiritual Reality. . . . I knew what a certain kind of contemplation meant, but I had no experience of prayer. Only when I practised both did God reveal Himself to me." " For a long time I gave myself to meditation, but this brought me no peace. Only when I began to pray did I feel God's Presence." " One simple prayer to Jesus helped me more than all my meditations." " Some time ago I was talking with Tagore about meditation. I said that I thought we could learn many things through meditation, but that in order to understand spiritual things more was needed." " In Christianity I find one very simple method : prayer. . . . That is the way to follow at all times ; it is the simplest way. Through prayer we learn to know God." " Prayer enables us to distinguish the genuine inspirations which come to us in meditation from those which are valueless ; for in real prayer God illuminates the deepest and most sensitive part of the soul : the conscience."

The Sâdhu, therefore, has found the golden mean between both extremes in the life of prayer : the childish and self-centred petition for all kinds of outward and inward gifts on the one hand, and barren self-centred introversion on the other. Both these extremes meet in the sense that they show that a man is still imprisoned within himself, though at different levels of personality. For Sundar Singh, on the contrary, prayer is the entire surrender of the heart to the Divine Being. That is why his prayer does not re-echo in an infinite void ; God answers him, reveals Himself to him, shows him the mystery of His love.

Yet we must not think that prayer first opens the way to Divine inspiration and the reception of grace ; no, in the last resort prayer is itself a Divine revelation, an imparting of grace. God is at work before man begins to pray ; He, not man, opens the way to communion. The search for God, and the longing after God in the

praying soul, is simply the working of that Divine Love which draws men to Itself as a magnet attracts iron.

"He who searches for Divine Reality with all his heart and soul, and finds it, becomes aware that, before he began to seek God, God was seeking him, in order to draw him into the joy of fellowship with Him, into the peace of His Presence; even as a child who has strayed, when he is safely back in his mother's arms, realises that she had been searching for him, with deep maternal love, before he had begun to think about her."

From all these self-revelations, exhortations, and parables, we gain a very clear impression of the peculiar depth, power, and inwardness of the Sâdhu's life of prayer. But we may go further and listen to the actual outpourings of his soul. He has himself written down two prayers which express in words his wordless communion with the Eternal. The first of these prayers belongs to that moment in the jungle when he repelled the tempter and then beheld his Saviour; the second forms the closing paragraph of his little book, *At the Master's Feet*, the main thoughts of which came to him in hours of quiet communion with his Lord.

"O Lord God who art all in all to me, Life of my life and Spirit of my spirit, have mercy on me and so fill me with Thy Holy Spirit and with love that there may be no room for anything else in my heart. I ask not for any blessing, but for Thyself, who art the giver of all blessings and of all life. I ask not for the world and its pomp and glory, nor for heaven, but I need Thee Thyself, for where Thou art, there is heaven. In Thyself alone is satisfaction and abundance for my heart; Thou Thyself, O Creator, hast created this heart for Thyself, and not for any other created thing. Therefore this heart cannot find rest in aught but Thee: only in Thee, O Father, who hast made this longing for peace. So now take out of this heart whatever is opposed to Thee and abide and rule in it Thyself. Amen."

"Dear Lord, my heart is full of gratitude for Thy various gifts and blessings. The gratitude of heart and lips alone is insufficient until I devote myself to Thy service with my life and prove it by my deeds. To Thee be thanks and praise for bringing me, a worthless creature, out of non-being into being, and for making me glad in Thy love and

fellowship. I do not know Thee fully, and do not know even my own needs; but Thou, O Father, knowest well Thy creatures and their needs. I am not able to love myself as much as Thou lovest me. In reality, to love oneself means that I should love with heart and soul the boundless love which created me and which is Thyself. It is for this very reason that Thou hast created in me only one heart, that it should be joined only to One, to Thee who didst create it.

Lord, to sit at Thy Feet is many times better and grander than sitting before any royal throne on earth; indeed, it means to be enthroned for ever in the eternal kingdom. Now I offer myself as a burnt-offering on the altar of those holy Feet. Accept it as and where Thou wishest; use me according to Thy pleasure. For Thou art mine and I am Thine. Thou didst make me in Thine image out of this handful of dust and grant me the right of becoming Thy child. May all honour and glory and praise be Thine for ever and ever. Amen."

These prayers are an excellent illustration of the sublime thoughts and prayers with which Sundar Singh's pamphlets and sermons abound. "His method of prayer is entirely that of the Catholic mystics"; petition is in the background, and where it does venture to appear it has one object only: God Himself and His Glory. Such prayer is indeed "sitting at the Master's Feet," breathing in the blessedness of His Presence, deep union with Him in love. The thoughts and prayers of the Sâdhu can be paralleled in the writings of the Christian Mystics, above all in St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Thomas à Kempis. The famous sentence in the introductory chapter of St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "*fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*"—is re-echoed here, as is also the cry of St. Francis of Assisi: "*Domine, ego non habeo nec amo nec volo nisi te*," and some of the most beautiful ejaculatory prayers of the *Imitatio Christi*: "*Ubi tu, ibi coelum*," "*Fac de me quidquid tibi placuerit*," "*Offero me ipsum tibi hodie in servum sempiternum*," "*Tu totus meus et ego totus tuus.*"

Behind all the Sâdhu's prayers and behind his teaching on prayer lies the great Augustinian principle: "*Nolite aliquid a Deo quaerere nisi Deum*," a principle which was

laid down also by Jalâl-ed-Dîn-Rûmi. And all Sundar Singh's experiences of prayer only confirm that thought of the "grace" of prayer, so often expressed by Augustine, and which we find in the prayer of Thomas à Kempis: "*Tu enim prior excitasti me, ut quaererem te.*" But in spite of all the undoubted influence of the *Imitation* and also of Islâmic mysticism through the Granth, Sundar Singh has not borrowed these sublime thoughts on prayer from St. Augustine or St. Francis or from the Sûfiš; they are the overflowing of his personal experience. That is why both his own prayers and his sayings on prayer sparkle like gold coins fresh from the mint.

The Sâdhu is one of the greatest exponents of Christian prayer; in the Christian history of prayer he takes a special place, not only because of the decision with which he affirms the centrality of prayer in Christian experience, but also on account of the lucidity and depth of his conception of prayer. To many of our contemporaries, both in the East and in the West, he has opened up the world of prayer. "He taught us to pray," wrote a Christian from the Malay Peninsula, "for our prayers are now quite different from what they were before."

2. Ecstasy

Sundar Singh is not only a man of prayer, he is a gifted ecstatic. His addresses give no hint of this. In them he usually alludes to his wonderful conversion, and to the marvellous experiences he has had of Divine guidance and deliverance; but he never speaks of the peculiar spiritual graces he has received; (18) even when he mentions revelations granted to him in this state of prayer, he says quite simply: "It was revealed to me in prayer. . . ." Sundar Singh's mystical gifts were first made public through Canon Streeter's book. The writer,

a trained psychologist and theologian, put some very pointed questions to Sundar Singh, and obtained from him a number of deeply interesting statements, which are of great value to students of the psychology of religion and of Church history.

At the same time, in the opinion of many people it is a matter of regret that the Sâdhu allowed Canon Streeter to publish these most intimate and sacred experiences during his lifetime. In so doing he has exposed himself to the reproaches of his enemies, who call him a " mountebank mystic." The seers of the Bible, when they wrote down their visions and locutions, concealed their identity behind a pseudonym. St. Francis of Assisi, according to his biographer, never revealed to anyone that which he experienced *ultra humanum sensum* ; his principle was always : *Beatus servus, qui secreta Domini Dei observat in corde suo.* Great Christian mystics, like St. Bernard of Clairvaux, hid their personal mystical experiences behind general theological statements ; others, like St. Catherine of Genoa, only disclosed their most sacred spiritual experiences to intimate friends or to their spiritual directors ; others, again, like St. Teresa, only wrote them down at the bidding of a confessor. Many people feel that it is a great pity that the Sâdhu, in his childlikeness of spirit, did not maintain that delicate reserve which is the mark of all great Christian mystics, and which is indeed his own normal attitude. He said to Canon Streeter : " Generally I never speak about these experiences to other people, for they would not understand me, and, indeed, they would think me a fool."

The Sâdhu has recently published some of his mystical experiences in a small book called *Visions of the Spiritual World.* As his Bishop has sanctioned its publication, and has even recommended it in the Foreword, no truly catholic-minded Christian can disapprove. The Church,

speaking through the Bishops, is the final judge in all questions of extraordinary mystical experience.

Sundar Singh's prayer-life shows very clearly that gradual ascent which we find everywhere in the inner life of the mystics, and which both Christian and non-Christian mystics have carefully defined as a kind of psychological "ladder." From meditation he passes into mental prayer, from which he "glides" (as he says himself) into ecstasy.

On the physiological side Sundar Singh describes ecstasy as that state in which all external perception is impossible. "As the diver ceases to breathe, so must the external senses be inactive during ecstasy." A friend who came upon him while he was in this state noticed that he was smiling and that his eyes were wide open; he addressed the Sâdhu, but the latter did not hear him. Another time he was caught up into a rapture while under a tree, and hornets stung him on different parts of his body without his feeling it.

Ecstasy obliterates not only sensation and perception, but all sense of time and space. "There is neither past nor future; all is present." Yet ecstasy does not produce a lowering of consciousness—rather it intensifies it to an extraordinary degree; it is not a semi-conscious state, such as hypnosis or trance (from which the Sâdhu differentiates it sharply), but rather an intensely alert, supra-conscious condition. "It is a wakeful state, not a dreamy one. I can think clearly and accurately therein."

Whereas in ordinary mental life external distractions, such as the association of ideas, prevent prolonged concentration upon one single thought, in ecstasy this concentration is possible: "Here I am able to brood for a long time over one thought." The Sâdhu goes so far as to say that "mental activity in the state of

ecstasy is quite independent of the usual activity of the brain."

The content of ecstasy is the silent direct vision of the invisible world. "No word is spoken, but I see everything in pictures; problems are often solved in a moment without the slightest difficulty or effort." The whole invisible world lies open to his inward vision; the "mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God" is here revealed to his soul; all the religious questions which perplex his mind here find their answer. He holds inward communion with Christ, he waits to receive the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; further, he even holds communion with angels and saints, with whom he is on familiar terms. As he contemplates the wonderful, unspeakable things of this heavenly world, his heart is filled with deep peace, with indescribable joy. "The sense of peaceful contentment, the consciousness of being at home," fills his soul during ecstasy; the effect is always the same; his previous mood makes no difference. When he returns to normal consciousness he feels strengthened and refreshed, with all his powers renewed for his work. He confesses, however, that at this point he feels it impossible to understand the ordinary man who is absorbed in earthly things: "Often, when the rapture is over, it seems to me that men must be blind not to see what I see, for it all seems so near and plain."

But in spite of the unspeakable bliss which he experiences in ecstasy he never makes any effort of his own to produce this state, as do the Yogis of his native land. He does not even wait for it, as the beggar waits at the rich man's gate in hope of alms [1] or as the traveller looks towards the east at daybreak for the rising of the sun. Ecstasy overtakes him when he neither expects

[1] Cf. the wonderful parables of Plotinus.

nor desires it ; indeed, when the duties of his state call him to the service of men, he even tries to stem its advance, as soon as he perceives the signs of its coming.

" Ecstasy," he says in a lucid phrase, " is a gift, which one may receive, but which one never seeks for oneself ; for him who receives it, it is the pearl of great price." During the early period after his conversion this gift was not yet granted to him ; according to his own account, " his eyes were opened to the Heavenly Vision " in 1912 at Kotgarh.[1] From that time forward this grace was granted to him more frequently ; he reckons that he experiences this gift of God from eight to ten times a month. The ecstasy usually lasts an hour or two. Compared with the experiences of Western mystics, this frequency is unusual. One has but to recollect that Plotinus only experienced ecstasy six times during his intercourse with Porphyry. We must realise, however, that the Oriental temperament, and especially the Indian, has a far greater tendency towards this kind of experience than the Western. The Indian temperament is so deeply aware of the unique reality of the Divine and of the nothingness of all that is merely earthly, and this sense must make it far easier to detach oneself frequently and for long periods of time from the external and visible world.

To use a modern illustration, we need only think of Devendranâth Tagore, the poet's father, who would sit sometimes for days lost in deep meditation. Once during a river journey he fell into an ecstasy through contemplating the beauty of the landscape ; in order not to disturb him, the rowers waited patiently for eight hours before they started out again.

The deepest reason of all for the frequency of this experience in the Sâdhu's life must be sought, however,

[1] In the Himalayas.

in his personal spiritual endowments ; it is not for nothing that he defends the entirely supernatural character of his ecstatic experiences. For him ecstasies are not only hours of blissful communion with God and foretastes of the heavenly glories, but springs of strength for his work as a preacher of the Gospel. In his own simple words he tells us what ecstasy means to him :

" The gift of ecstasy which God has given me is more precious than any earthly home could ever be. In it I find a joy so wonderful that it transcends all others." " During the fourteen years that I have been living as a Sâdhu there have often been times when the stress of hunger, thirst, and persecution might have tempted me to give up this way of life, had I not just then received the grace of ecstasy. I would not exchange this gift for the whole world."

Just because this grace is indissolubly bound up with his divine vocation he is clearly aware of the abnormal, extraordinary character of these experiences. He believes that the normal course of communion with God should be along the line of simple prayer, not in the way of ecstasy.

" Prayer is for everyone, and so is meditation. If it is God's Will that anyone should go farther, God Himself will show him the way ; if this is not granted him, let him remain contentedly upon the simple level of ordinary prayer."

These words show us that Sundar Singh, in spite of his own deep mystical experience, has not lost touch with the needs of ordinary simple Christian men and women.

3. Inward Peace

To Sundar Singh the most precious element in the state of ecstasy is the unspeakable peace which he tastes at that moment. But this holy peace is not limited to these hours of ecstasy, which only come now and again : it pervades his whole life. All the time he feels Christ's

living Presence, which brings with it "that peace which the world cannot give." (19)

"In whatever circumstances I may be, His Presence gives me a peace which passes all understanding. In the midst of persecution, peace, joy, and happiness have been mine. No one can take from me the joy which I have found in my Saviour."

Šânti ("Peace")—no other word falls from the Sâdhu's lips with such a wonderful echo as this; "Peace"—for many years this was his deepest longing; yet he was not alone in this; all religious Indians desire it. Both the Hindu and the Buddhist Scriptures are full of the praises of holy *šânti*, the Bhagavadgîtâ as well as the Buddhist Dhammapadam, the Theragâthâ and Therîgâthâ (the songs of Buddhist monks and nuns). Some of the Upanishads begin and end with a kind of solemn, rhythmical chant, consisting of the words *šânti*, *šânti*, *šânti*. But all these sacred writings of his own homeland failed to give him the promised blessing; it was the Living Christ, revealing Himself to him in a wonderful way, who brought him this gift of grace. "In Christ I have found that which neither Hinduism nor Buddhism could give me, peace and joy upon earth." That is why, as Söderblom points out, peace is to him "the essence of religion," "the beginning and the end of Christianity." "The existence of this peace," says Canon Streeter, "and the possibility of attaining it, are for the Sâdhu the core of the Christian message."

This peace which Christ, and He alone, can give, surpasses all thought and all comprehension, all words and all speech. Sundar Singh says:

"It is such a wonderful peace, I only wish I could show it to you. But this is impossible, for you cannot see it—you cannot describe it to others. There are no words to express what this peace really is." "Even in my mother tongue I can find no word to express this peace." "But those whose spiritual eyes are open will be able to understand it."

Yet that which words cannot express can be revealed through bearing and behaviour. The Sâdhu's face is a living sermon about the peace which he carries in his heart. Söderblom says : " He radiates peace and joy. One who went about with him a good deal describes him as the embodiment of peace, gentleness, and loving-kindness." Mrs. Parker says : " That which is so surprising about the Sâdhu is the quite extraordinary joy which one can see upon his face—no picture can give an idea of the beauty of his smile." It was this steady, quiet joy which particularly struck Sundar Singh's father, who had only known him as a restless, unhappy youth. In 1920 he said to his son : " I have been watching your life and comparing it with the years which you spent at home. At home you were never happy, but now, in spite of your many sorrows I have never seen you unhappy. Why is that ? " Sundar answered : " It is not due to any good in me, but it has come to me because I have found peace in the Living Christ, whom formerly I hated."

Peace and joy fill the Sâdhu's soul not only during periods of quiet work, but still more in times of distress, suffering, and persecution. He says himself : " I have experienced more joy during persecution than when things went easily." Over and over again, as Sundar Singh tells in his addresses, it was just at the hardest and most terrible moments of his life that he was most conscious of this heavenly peace, e.g. during that first night after he had been driven out from his father's home ; on a cold night in inhospitable Tibet ; in prison at Ilom in Nepal, and in the horrible mortuary at Rasar.

The most wonderful experience the Sâdhu has ever had of this peace was on that occasion when he was thrown into a well which was full of dead bodies. " The physical suffering was great, but in spirit I was

happy. I began to pray to God, and His joy flowed into my heart to such an extent that I forgot the gruesome place I was in. A wonderful peace filled my heart, so lovely that I cannot describe it." "Never have I experienced greater blessedness in the peace of Jesus, received through prayer, than during those very days. Christ's peace turned that deep well into the Gate of Heaven." "How was it possible to have the peace of God in the pitch-dark night, in the midst of corpses and dead men's bones? Joy like this, peace like this, comes from nothing in this world. God alone can give it. While I was sitting there in the well I reflected that I never felt this kind of happiness while I lived in the house of my parents in comfort and luxury. Whence, then, came this overflowing joy in that terrible den? I saw then, more clearly than ever, that Jesus is alive, and that it was He who was filling my heart with peace and joy."

To Sundar Singh this wonderful peace is not merely psychological, it has a certain metaphysical greatness. He sees in it not merely the natural effect of certain psychic powers and events, but supernatural grace, a revelation of transcendental Reality, the inflow of the Eternal Love of God.

"The wonderful peace which the man of prayer feels during his prayer is not the fruit of his own imagination or of his own thoughts, but it is the result of the Presence of God in his soul. The mist which rises from a pond cannot form itself into great clouds and return to the earth as rain. Great clouds can only be drawn up from the mighty ocean, and it is the rain which comes from them which refreshes and quickens the thirsty earth. Peace does not come from our subconscious life, but from the infinite ocean of the Love of God, with whom we are united in prayer."

"I was talking once with a very learned man, a psychologist, who assured me that the wonderful peace which I experienced was simply the effect of my own imagination. Before I answered him I told him the story of a person who was blind from birth, and who did not believe in the existence of the sun. One cold winter day he sat outside in the sunshine, and then his friends asked him: 'How do you feel now?' He replied: 'I feel very warm.' 'It is the sun which is making you warm; although you cannot see it, you feel its effects.' 'No,' he said, 'that is impossible; this warmth comes from my own body; it is due to the circulation of the blood. You will never make me believe that a ball of fire is suspended in the midst of the heavens without any pillar to support it.' Well, I said to the psychologist, 'What do you think of

the blind man? 'He was a fool!' he answered. 'And you,' I said to him, 'are a learned fool! You say that my peace is the effect of my own imagination, but *I* have experienced it.'"

To Sundar Singh this heavenly peace is the central miracle of his life, and not only of *his* life, it is the central miracle of Christianity, the proof of the truth of the Gospel. It is the fulfilment of the deepest longing which God has put into the heart of man. "Peace of heart," he says, "is the greatest miracle in this world; we find this peace only in Christ. He has created our heart for peace, therefore it can only be at rest when it has found it." "There are few great Christian personalities who have had such a deep experience of this peace of heart, and who have declared it with such certainty as this Christian disciple from that land in which peace of soul has been for centuries the highest religious goal. Sundar Singh's experience of life confirms the saying of St. Augustine: "*Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*"

4. The Joy of the Cross

Peace and joy—in the mind of Sundar Singh these form the *motif* of the normal Christian life. But in his own experience he has never found such pure, deep, overflowing joy and peace as in times of most painful external sufferings. "When I had to suffer for my Saviour I found heaven on earth; that is, a wonderful joy, which I did not feel at other times. In suffering I have always had such a strong sense of the Presence of Christ that no doubt could cross my mind. His Presence was radiant as the sun at noonday."

This paradoxical experience has led the Sâdhu into the depths of the Christian philosophy of suffering. Suffering is the way to communion with God and to blessedness.

"The Cross is like the fruit of the walnut-tree. The outer rind is bitter, but the kernel is refreshing and strengthening. From the outside the Cross has neither beauty nor goodness; its essence is only revealed to those who bear it. They find a kernel of spiritual sweetness and inward peace."

"During an earthquake it sometimes happens that fresh springs break out in dry places which water and quicken the land so that plants can grow. In the same way the shattering experiences of suffering can cause the living water to well up in a human heart."

"A newborn child has to cry, for only in this way will his lungs expand. A doctor once told me of a child who could not breathe when it was born. In order to make it breathe the doctor gave it a slight blow. The mother must have thought the doctor cruel. But he was really doing the kindest thing possible. As with newborn children the lungs are contracted, so are our spiritual lungs. But through suffering God strikes us in love. Then our lungs expand and we can breathe and pray."

"Once there was a man who noticed a silkworm in its cocoon; he saw how it was twisting and struggling; it was in great distress. The man went to it and helped it to get free. The silkworm made a few more efforts, but after a while it died. The man had not helped it; he had only disturbed its growth. Another man saw a silkworm suffering in the same way, but he did not do anything to help it. He knew that this conflict and struggle was a good thing, that the silkworm would grow stronger in the process, and so be better prepared for its new stage of life. In the same way suffering and distress in this world help us to get ready for the next life."

Thus it is that suffering and the Cross are the means which God uses to give to men the deepest and purest blessedness. But the Cross does not bring only blessedness to man, it makes him like God. Because the Saviour of the world Himself endured suffering and the Cross, in like manner humanity becomes transformed into His likeness through the Cross and through suffering. True suffering is part of Christian mysticism; it draws the Christian into the closest living fellowship with Christ. "It is a great privilege, a great honour, to enter into 'the fellowship of His sufferings.'" Hence it is Sundar Singh's earnest desire in all things to follow the example of the suffering Christ. In all

the suspicions and accusations hurled at him by his opponents he keeps steadily before his eyes the picture of the silent Christ before the Sanhedrin. And as he wishes to suffer with Christ, so also he desires to die with Him.

"Because I am glad to share in the sufferings of Christ I have no desire to experience His return while I am yet alive. . . . Rather I long to do as He did, to die, and through the gate of death to enter heaven, that I may understand something of what it meant to Him to die for us."

Like other great Christian martyrs and mystics, Sundar Singh is a true "Lover of the Cross." Now and again, like Suso or Thomas à Kempis, he even breaks into an inspired hymn to "the Cross," which hides within itself the deepest secret of spiritual joy.

"The Cross is the key of Heaven." "There is nothing higher than the Cross in earth or heaven. Through the Cross God reveals His love to man. Without the Cross we should know nothing of the love of our Heavenly Father. For this reason God desires all His children to bear this heavy but sweet burden; for only in this way can our love to God and His to us become visible to others." "To follow Christ and to carry His Cross is so sweet and precious that if I find no cross to bear in heaven I shall beseech Him to send me into hell, if that be possible, in order that there at least I may have the opportunity of bearing His Cross. His Presence can turn hell into heaven."

This supernatural power of the Cross only reveals itself, however, to him who accepts it with humility and gratitude. "*Si libenter portas crucem, portabit te et ducet te ad desideratum finem*"—in these words of the *Imitation of Christ* Sundar Singh again expresses his inmost personal experience.

"Out of my long experience as a Sâdhu and Sannyâsi for Christ's sake, I can say with confidence that the Cross will bear those who bear the Cross, until it bears them up to heaven, into the actual Presence of the glorified Redeemer."

5. Heaven upon Earth

The experience of Christ's Presence in prayer, deep joyful peace of soul, the sweetness of the Cross and of suffering in this world—all this the Sâdhu loves to call "Heaven upon earth." This expression, which he uses again and again, both in his public addresses and in private conversations, Sundar Singh has not borrowed from the New Testament or the *Imitatio Christi*, still less from Luther or from Jakob Böhme, but rather from the old Vedic writings. In one of the most famous of the Upanishads this phrase occurs: "In very deed, this Âtman is in the heart . . . in truth, he who knows this enters daily into the heavenly world." Like that Brahman sage, Sundar Singh feels as though the whole of his life since his conversion has been lived in heaven. "This is my testimony," he said again and again in Switzerland, "for the past sixteen years I have lived in heaven." But his sense of present eternal bliss reaches its highest point when he has to endure hardness for Christ. That terrible night which he had to spend in the open after he was driven out of his home he calls his "first night in heaven." After his imprisonment at Ilom he wrote on the first page of his New Testament: "Christ's Presence has turned my prison into a heaven of blessing." In the horrible den full of corpses he said to himself: "This hell is heaven!" This supernatural experience of "heaven upon earth" is based on prayer, which itself brings man into immediate living communion with the Lord of heaven.

"In proportion to the reality of our inward prayer is our experience of joy and heaven upon earth." "When our souls are in communion with God and we experience the Reality of His Presence, we discover

that heaven consists in the possession of perfect peace." "When we wait upon God in the stillness of prayer," "we do not need to wait for the next world, we have already reached heaven upon earth." "The Christian lives already in heaven here upon earth. His heavenly life consists in prayer, in continual communion with God in prayer." "In prayer we are filled with the life of God and taste the bliss of heaven." "Eternal life is lived in prayer and is begun here below." "Through prayer this earth is turned into God's heaven."

For Sundar Singh the whole mystery and wonder of the Christian life consists in the fact that "life in heaven" begins upon this earth, that eternal blessedness begins in time. "This is the mystery: that here on earth we begin to live in heaven, because we live with our Saviour." For the Sâdhu, Christianity is not so much a religion which consists in the promise of heaven, or the hope of heaven, but rather in heaven as a present possession.

"All other religions offer a future redemption, but Christianity says: Now. The man who wrote these words, 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,' knew this from experience."

"He who believeth on Me hath everlasting life"—this word of the Johannine Christ is in the background of all Sundar Singh's thinking about heaven upon earth.

One cannot indeed find a stronger defender of Christian "other-worldliness" than this Indian Christian disciple; but the "other world" is not for him something in the future, but a present gift of grace; something which is great and wonderful, not in the apocalyptic, eschatological sense, but in the mystical sense.

It is only this present experience of transcendental Reality that makes it possible to have the right attitude towards the future life; it is only because the Christian life already involves having "our conversation in

heaven" that we are able to regard it as a school or preparation for the heavenly life.

"Many think, as I did when I was a Hindu, that joy and bliss are only attainable in a future existence. But when I became a Christian I found that joy and bliss do not belong to us merely in the next world, but that we can say that here on this earth we are in heaven." "There are unhappy Christians who rejoice in the thought of entering heaven after death, but they do not realise that heaven must begin here on earth. I do not believe in a religion which only offers a heaven after this life is done." "Your dwelling-place is not here; the real home is above. But before you go thither you must begin to live in your rightful home. Those Christians who wait for heaven, but who are not at home in heaven already, will feel rather strange when they reach the 'many mansions.' They will not enjoy being in a place and in surroundings to which they are not accustomed."

"Heaven upon earth"—to Sundar Singh nothing less than this is the Christian life. All the deep joy of his soul re-echoes in these words. But to him heaven means Christ. The Christocentric character of his piety shows itself most clearly at this point. It was indeed Christ Himself who brought heaven to the Sâdhu at that moment when he had determined to leave this world by the gate of suicide. Now he can say: "In this present life I am already in heaven, because I am in Christ."

B. VITA ACTIVA

1. Brotherly Love

"The life in heaven" which the Sâdhu lives is not one of idle dreaming, but of strenuous industry. The peace of heart which he values so highly is no self-centred enjoyment, but the source of tireless work for his brethren. The same man who spends whole days in quiet communion with the Eternal also travels from land to land with bleeding feet, in order to bring

salvation to others. The same devout soul who proclaims constantly the wonders of the mystical inward life always speaks with the warmest appreciation of the glory of unselfish acts of love. The same man of prayer who never omits any opportunity of saying to his hearers, "Pray without ceasing," also never tires of calling them to selfless service for their brethren.

Like the greatest Christian monks and mystics, Sundar Singh unites in wonderful harmony the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*—" he has indeed," as Evelyn Underhill remarks, "discovered that balance of life which is laid down in the Rule of St. Benedict." In the early morning he sits "at the Master's Feet" in silent prayer ; far from all earthly sights and sounds he sits rapt in ecstasy. Throughout the day he proclaims the message of Christ to crowds of people, and helps with loving pastoral care the souls of individuals who come to him in their inward distresses and perplexities.

It would be quite impossible to the Sâdhu to spend his life remote from the world in solitary communion with God. "God did not create us to live in caves, but to go out amongst men and help them." The miracles which he experiences daily in his quiet hours of communion with God drive him out again to work, to activity, to the proclamation of the Gospel, to missionary journeys. The heavenly peace which he receives from his Saviour's presence is a perpetual incentive to the spreading of the Good News of Christ. He may not keep to himself the joy which is given him ; he has to pass it on to his brothers who are in spiritual need.

"To him who has received this peace and happiness, it is not necessary to say : 'Go and tell others.' He cannot keep it to himself." "This is the most important thing, that, after we have received the blessing, we give it out again to others without delay. . . . If we have really

received the love of Christ and been gripped by it, we cannot possibly sit still. We must go out and pass it on to others." (20) "He who is saved, loves other people and longs to help them. God indeed is nothing but Love. How can we possess and enjoy this love without . . . thinking of those who have the same right to it as we have?"

"Once God has become a living Reality to us, we simply have to love our fellow-men; we cannot help it. If His Life has vitalised us, we begin to live in love, quite naturally, and it is a joy to be loving to others. If we live in Him and He in us, we cannot help serving our brethren. For God is Love, and in union with Him we become strong to love and help others."

"No one ought to think that what he has to give others is not worth giving, however small or poor it may seem. Many tiny brooks go to the making of a river. What the Lord most desires is faithfulness in small things, in small services to others. Therefore may the Lord lead us into the fellowship of giving and receiving, that we, sharing the quickening grace of God, may be blessed in our own hearts and then become a blessing to others."

Gratitude for the salvation received from God urges the Christian forward, of his own accord, to works of love for his brethren. God Himself has made an infinite act of love towards man in laying aside His divine glory, becoming man, and, as man, in suffering and dying for our salvation. Therefore the redeemed soul, who has received so much from God, must go out and give love to his brethren, sacrifice himself for them, in order to be to them in some sense a redeemer and a saviour too.

"Christ came down from heaven in order to redeem us; if He had remained in heaven we should have been lost. If we are selfish and live comfortably without troubling ourselves about our brothers, it shows that we have not understood the example which Jesus Christ gave us when He came down from heaven."

Self-surrender and self-sacrifice are the only means whereby redeemed men can bring redemption to others.

"Many people despise those who give their health, their strength, their means, for others, and call them fools; and yet they are those who are able to save many." "Not until we lavish our strength do men

begin to see that we are not selfish, but that we are really redeemed. Our Saviour says that we are the salt of the earth. Salt does not impart its flavour to other things until it is dissolved. Suppose we put some salt into a saucepan with boiling rice. . . . Because it dissolves it gives flavour to thousands of grains of rice. In the same manner we can only redeem others by giving ourselves up for them."

So the Christian gives out the love which he has received from the Father; he gives his life for his brethren. But that which he gives away he receives back in full measure. The strength which he seems to lose flows back again. Generous, helpful, self-sacrificing love heightens the joy which man receives from God through humble faith.

"This giving out becomes a blessing to ourselves. That is my own experience. When I went up to Tibet, if I did not give out some blessing or power which I felt I possessed, I lost my peace; and when I gave away any gift of strength, then peace came back." "The pipe which carries water from place to place is always clean, because it is always being cleansed by fresh pure flowing water. It is just the same with those who are used by the Holy Spirit to serve as channels of the living water to others. They keep themselves pure and holy and become heirs of God's Kingdom."

As the inner life with God grows through the loving service of others, so it contracts if it shuts itself up to self-centred reflection, caring nothing for the world outside. A mysticism which confines itself to "pure contemplation" spells the death of true fellowship with God. By a series of vivid parables and stories the Sâdhu illuminates this side of his experience.

"Fish which always live in the depths of the ocean lose some of their faculties, like the Tibetan hermits who always live in the dark. The ostrich loses his power of flying because he does not use his wings. Therefore do not bury the gifts and talents which have been given to you, but use them, that you may enter into the joy of your Lord."

"While I was in Tibet I saw a Buddhist, a monk, who had lived for five or six years in a cave. When he went into the cave he had good eyesight. But because he stayed so long in the darkness his eyes grew

weaker and weaker, and at last he became quite blind. It is just the same with us. If we do not use the blessings which we have received from God for His Glory, we are in danger of losing them for ever."

"When I was in Palestine I stood by the Jordan and said to myself: 'This fresh water is always flowing into the Dead Sea, and yet the Sea remains dead, because it has no outlet.' . . . Even so there are individual Christians and Christian communities and churches which are dead because the living waters of the Gospel are always flowing into them, but they are not flowing out again to make the land fruitful. They receive gifts of knowledge and experience, but they do not share them with others. The gifts of the Word and of the Spirit come to them, but they do not give them out again to those who have them not."

Thus it is clear that all Christian service, all works of mercy and of humble devotion, have their source in God ; they flow out spontaneously from the soul which has humbly received the love of God. Therefore this service of the brethren is no mere human activity ; it is the creative work of Divine grace. In a living Christian experience faith and love are inseparably united.

"In our own strength we are powerless to radiate a wide-spreading selfless love. When I was a Hindu I tried to love others because my religion told me to do so. I wanted to obey the precepts of my religion, but I had no power to carry it out. The mere command could not create within me that love which I did not possess. But when Christ revealed Himself to me, then I learnt by experience the meaning of true love. Then I saw the difference between Hinduism and Christianity. Hinduism left me shut up in my narrow selfishness, but Christianity made it possible for me to live for others."

With rare clarity and wonderful power Sundar Singh has expressed the fundamental Christian idea of that "Love of the Brethren" which flows out of the inward experience of God's Grace, of that "faith which worketh through love."[1] Since the time of Luther, perhaps, this inward conviction has never been so clearly seen nor so strongly emphasised. It is surprising to find

[1] Gal. v. 6.

how many thoughts of the Sâdhu correspond almost word for word with expressions used by Luther, in spite of the fact that Sundar Singh has never come into direct touch with Luther's writings.

"All Christian doctrine, work, and life is summed up briefly, clearly, and supremely in these two things: Faith and Love, by means of which man is placed between God and his neighbour in order to receive from God and to pass on to his neighbour that which is given him; he is like a vessel or a pipe through which the fountains of Divine blessing flow unhindered into the lives of others."

"This epistle (Titus iii. 4 ff.) teaches us two things: Faith and Love—to receive benefits from God, and to give them to our neighbour. . . . The stronger a person's faith, the more ready and willing he is to take trouble about helping other people. Thus faith brings forth love, and love increases faith. And from faith, love and longing flow out towards God, and love flows out again in free, willing, happy service of one's neighbour, looking for nothing in return."

"Indeed, my God has given to me, an unworthy, guilty mortal, all the riches of Christ's blessedness, so that I can rest in its sure possession; very well then, I will give back to a Father who has lavished upon me so much out of His great Heart, all that I can, and this freely, happily, and purely for love's sake, desiring only to please Him, and I will try, too, to be a Christian towards my neighbour, as Christ has been to me, doing simply that which is best for him."

"Now thou seest here that He hath loved us and done all His works for us, to this end only, that we should do the same to our neighbour (not to Him, for He does not need it). . . . It is like this: Christ helpeth us, and we help our neighbour, and all have enough."

"When we see what great mercy we have received from Christ, then is our heart glad that it hath found someone on whom it may bestow this benefit after the example of Christ. Therefore, he who is not ready in his heart to serve his neighbour with all that he has . . . that man neither knoweth nor understandeth the meaning of these words: God's Son became man."

These glorious sayings of Luther re-echo wonderfully clearly in the message of the Christian Sâdhu. This involuntary agreement of Sundar Singh with Martin Luther is a fresh testimony to the fact that the German reformer had heard the inward music of Christianity and had found it to be nothing less than "Faith and Love" [Gläuben und Lieben].

2. Witness for Christ

Sundar Singh's heart longs for solitary fellowship with God, for quiet blissful intercourse with heaven. The complete withdrawal from this world experienced in ecstasy is his real home on earth. And yet again and again he feels impelled to leave his solitude, and go out into the noisy world in the service of his brethren. In this, he sees, lies the great task which the Christian must fulfil during his brief lifetime, a task which is more precious and holy than that of the angels who surround God's throne.

The urgent desire to serve his brethren and to bring to them help and deliverance is only one of the motives which leads the Sâdhu to the *vita activa*. The other motive is the desire "to bear witness" to the miracles which God has wrought in him, and so to give to God "the glory due unto His Name." Even when the ministry of self-giving love seems an utter failure, when men reject the Good News which is brought to them in loving words and deeds, even then it is still a duty as Christ's witness to speak to deaf ears and hard hearts, and, if need be, to seal this testimony with suffering: in persecution and imprisonment, even to torture and to death. The Sâdhu can say with the Apostle, "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel." In the following words Sundar Singh has expressed this irresistible impulse to proclaim God's message:

"If we have really received God's redeeming message, it becomes a power within us which impels us to speak of the Lord. Those who have experienced this cannot sit still and keep silence about that which God has done for them; no, they *must* speak." "We have no right to be silent; even when confession of Christ leads to persecution and suffering we *must* bear witness."

But this witness-bearing to God's Grace is no mere stern duty, it is the joy of his heart and a precious privilege.

"It is a joy to me to be allowed to bear witness." "I want to bear witness of my Saviour, because I have received so much from Him." "What a privilege it is to be His witness, a witness of the Living Christ! That is a privilege not even given to the angels, because they cannot testify to His power as Redeemer. They have no experience of salvation because they have never sinned. Only those who have been saved by His grace can bear witness." "O what love God has shown toward us, in refusing this honour to the angels, and in granting it to men."

The highest and holiest form in which a Christian can bear witness, the *μαρτύριον par excellence*, is the witness of blood, the martyr's death for Christ. It is the Sâdhu's greatest longing to bear this kind of witness. The attraction which he feels for the closed land of Tibet is based very largely on the possibility of meeting his death in that country for proclaiming the Gospel. In his addresses he loves to dwell upon the martyrs who have suffered death for Christ in Tibet, Armenia, and other places. Far dearer to him than all other "sights" were the pictures of Christian martyrs in Western picture-galleries (such as the picture of St. Sebastian at the Louvre) and shrines of martyrs which were shown him in Western churches (as, for instance, the grave of St. Eric in Upsala Cathedral). But in spite of this passionate attraction towards literal martyrdom for Christ, the Sâdhu speaks with deep appreciation of that silent martyrdom which consists in a life of daily self-sacrifice for Christ's sake.

Christ speaks: "To many a believer it is easy to die a martyr's death for My sake. But I need also *living* martyrs, who offer themselves daily as living sacrifices for others. For it is easy to die for Me, but difficult to live for Me; for he who lives for Me dies, not once for all, but daily."

There is not only a public but a hidden martyrdom which is consummated, not upon a scaffold, in the sight of all, but in the midst of everyday life. Every Christian is called to be a "martyr," a witness for Christ. Even the poorest and weakest can, by his life, "bear silent but eloquent witness" to the love and power of God.

"It is not necessary for everyone to be a preacher." "It is quite possible to be a great preacher without being a witness for Christ. It is also possible to be a living witness, indeed a great witness, for Christ without being a preacher or a speaker." "Every Christian, whether man or woman, boy or girl, rich or poor, workman or peasant, writer or priest, judge or official, doctor or lawyer, teacher or pupil, Government official or missionary, is only a Christian on condition that he witnesses for his Lord. In order to bear witness to Him it does not necessarily follow that we must preach in the bazaar or from the pulpit, or that we must conduct Bible classes, Sunday Schools, and Christian Unions; no, these are only some of the ways by which we can witness; but all Christians, wherever they are, have the opportunity of witnessing for their Master. They can do this by their upright life, their blameless character, by the integrity of their behaviour and their sincerity in speech, by their enthusiasm for their religion and their love for their Master, using every possible opportunity of telling others about Jesus Christ." "Every one of them can be a witness for Christ, not only with his lips but by his whole life." "Every Christian ought to be a living martyr, who lives for the sake of his Master."

3. In the World, yet not of the World

The true Christian life is to be *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, life in God and life for the brethren, solitary prayer and public witness.

"What are the most important things a Christian has to do? They are two, and the one depends upon the other: prayer and work. They are like the lungs, both of which have to be used."

Viewed from this double aspect, the Christian life is both life in heaven and life in the world. He who would live only in heaven, turning his back upon the whole world, is in danger of losing heaven altogether;

on the other hand, he who pours himself out in work for the world to such an extent that he forgets God will find that all his human efforts will not suffice to bring him to heaven. So the Christian must take the risks of living and working in the world and yet have his heart in heaven, which is his eternal home. The Sâdhu expresses the richness of this double life constantly in a phrase which he has borrowed from the great founder of his ancestral faith, Guru Nânak : " Although I am in the world, I am not of the world "—a thought which Luther has expressed in somewhat the same way :

" So I am separate from the world, and yet I am in the world. No one is less in the world than a Christian, and no one is more worldly than a Christian."

" We must so live in this world," says Sundar Singh, " that we are *really* in the world yet not of it." In a delightful parable he expands this thought in further detail:

" The fishes of the sea live in salt water, yet when we eat boiled fish there is no salt taste in the water in which they have been boiled. They have lived in an atmosphere impregnated with salt, yet they have kept free from its flavour. So do true Christians live in the world, without taking it into their hearts." " The man of prayer remains free from the taint of sin although he lives in a sin-stained world, because his inner life is preserved by prayer."

The Sâdhu expresses his idea of the Christian's relationship with the world in a similar formula : " Although we are, and ought to be, in the world, the world must not enter into us." In vivid parables the Sâdhu illustrates this truth.

" The world is like an ocean. We cannot live without water, it is true, but it is also true that we cannot live if we allow the water to engulf us, for there is life in water and also death. If we make use of water we find that there is life in it, but if we are drowned we find death." " In this world we are like little boats." " A boat is only useful on the

water; for there it conveys men from one shore to another. But if we drag it overland, through fields, or into a town, we find that as a vehicle it is utterly useless. The place for a boat is on a river or on the sea. But this does not mean that the water must be *in* the boat. For if it is in the boat, the boat will become useless; no one would then be able to steer it over the water. It would fill with water, sink beneath the waves, and whoever was in it would be drowned. The boat must be in the water, but the water must not be in the boat."

"In the world, yet not of the world," "We are in the world, but the world is not in us"—these are indeed wonderfully simple formulas for the Christian's attitude towards the world. But how is the believer to live and act in the world without being either affected or infected by it? The Sâdhu replies: "Christ must be in us instead of the world." And he points once more to that communion with God through which the Christian achieves the apparently impossible task of keeping pure in the midst of a world of temptation and conflict, in the midst of a world so full of attractive sensuous suggestion, by keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the supra-sensual world.

"There is one remedy which will protect us against the sinister influence of material things; but we must have recourse to it daily—it is prayer. If we live in prayer we are hidden in God. I too have found that I had to flee to prayer when the things of this world threatened to cast their spell over me."

Prayer, then, has the power of performing a double miracle: it brings man into communion with the Eternal, it brings him into touch with his Divine Saviour, and at the same time it gives him power to be active in the world without losing himself in it. Prayer is the secret both of the *vita contemplativa* and of the *vita activa*.

Part IV

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT-WORLD OF THE SÂDHU

1. Theologia Experimentalis

SUNDAR SINGH is absolutely childlike in his intercourse with God. He belongs to the category of naïve religious personalities, not to the "reflective," to Francis of Assisi and to Luther, not to Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, or Calvin. Although in his youth he was familiar with the theological and philosophical wisdom of India, and although later (in the college at Lahore) he gave himself to the study of Christian theology, neither his piety nor his evangelistic message bear the marks of any particular philosophical or theological tendency. Any purely intellectual speculation about Divine Reality is as far from his way of thinking as is any attempt to reduce subjective experience to an ordered whole. Sundar Singh knows one kind of theology only, the *theologia experimentalis*, or perhaps it is truer to say : he has one sole criterion in religious matters—personal experience of salvation. The sworn enemy of all theological intellectualism, he rejects both those definite abstract conceptions which are the contribution of philosophy to theology and that subtle logic which attempts to construct a uniform theological system.

Expertus sum is the only proof that he can offer for the joyful assurance of his faith. *Experire*—that is the only advice he can offer to others.

"In Christ I have found what Hinduism and Buddhism could not give me, peace and joy in this world. People do not believe, because

they are strangers to the experience. Once when I was wandering about in the Himalayas, in the region of eternal snow and ice, I came upon some hot springs, and I told a friend about them. He would not believe it. 'How can there be hot springs in the midst of ice and snow?' I said: 'Come and dip your hands in the water, and you will see that I am right.' He came, dipped his hands in the water, felt the heat and believed. Then he said: 'There must be a fire in the mountain.' So after he had been convinced by experience his brain began to help him to understand the matter. Faith and experience must come first, and understanding will follow. We cannot understand until we have some spiritual experience, and that comes through prayer. . . . As we practise prayer we shall come to know who the Father is and the Son, we shall become certain that Christ is everything to us and that nothing can separate us from Him and from His Love. Temptations and persecutions may come, but nothing can part us from Christ. Prayer is the only way to this glorious experience."

These simple words contain the whole of the Sâdhu's "experimental theology." The wonderful peace which he has found in Christ is to him the proof of the truth of God's revelation in Christ. The way to this peace is through deep and secret prayer. Since this has led him to salvation, he wants to lead all other souls by the same road to that blessed goal. No dogma, no authority, whether of Scripture or of the Church, no theological speculation, can establish this certainty and assurance of salvation; there is no hope in anything save in the most personal experience of the individual soul.

"The fact that Jesus Christ is spoken of in a book, even though it be the Bible, is not sufficient proof; this proof must be found in your own hearts. In your hearts you must find Him, and then you will understand that He is your Saviour." "I do not proclaim the Gospel of Christ because it is written in a book, but because I know its power through experience." "Christianity includes many truths which we do not understand if we simply learn about them in books; they only become clear when they are experienced. Christianity is no book-religion, but a religion of life."

"Religious truths cannot be perceived by the head, but by the heart." "Through the understanding alone we cannot find Christ. . . . Religion is a matter of the heart. We must give ourselves to God, then we shall experience His power and He will reveal Himself to us." "Spiritual

intuition is as delicate as the sense of touch; it feels the reality of the Presence of God as soon as it is touched by Him. The soul cannot account for this logically, but it reasons thus: I am perfectly satisfied; such peace can only come from Divine Reality, therefore I have found Divine Reality. The heart has its reasons of which the mind knows nothing."

These words of Sundar Singh recall the anti-intellectual axiom of Pascal: "*Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait pas.*" Like Luther, he distrusts philosophy as a means of spiritual enlightenment.

"Our knowledge of Divine Reality depends upon our inner life, and not upon philosophical arguments." "Although Philosophy tries to grasp Divine Reality, it does not succeed. No one can grasp Divine Reality with the intellect." "Jesus began His work, not among philosophers, but with simple fisherfolk. The world has seen many learned men, and many of them it has already forgotten; but these simple men who helped Jesus Christ in His work will never be forgotten."

Because the experience of the heart is the decisive element in the life of faith, therefore the Sâdhu recognises one authority only in the sphere of religion, the authority of believing souls, who are in close personal touch with God. Neither able philosophers nor learned theologians can help us in the inner life of the spirit.

"If we want to learn anything about religion we must turn to those who are "specialists" in this realm, to those who have tested in their own experience what religion really means. We do not expect an engineer to understand surgery, nor a surgeon to know about mechanics. What do theologians and philosophers know about the Divinity of Christ? Go instead to the 'specialists' in religion, to mystics, prophets, and men of prayer."

This inward experience of salvation which is consummated in the life of prayer is the Alpha and Omega of the Sâdhu's message. But this inner experience does not consist merely in a delightful sense of liberation; at every point it is both conditioned and upheld by

supernatural Divine Reality. In order to prevent this Reality from evaporating in a vague welter of emotion the soul needs strong and definite conceptions. There is no true and complete religious experience which can entirely dispense with clear perceptions. Indeed, the concrete perception confirms the reality of that religious experience which has already been grasped by the will and the emotions. The greater the immediacy and vividness of the inner experience, the stronger is the creative power of the imagination.

To a large extent Sundar Singh's religious images are his own creation ; in some degree, however, he is indebted to the ancient Hindu Scriptures, e.g. the Upanishads, and to contemporary Indian poets like Tagore. He himself has a wonderful capacity of expressing his spiritual experiences in quite simple and yet unusually vivid pictures and parables, which carry conviction to others. To borrow Söderblom's striking phrase : " To the Sâdhu a parable is more than a picture or a sudden flash of illumination. His parables are not accidental ; in his mind they have the stability of articles of faith. Indeed, the pictures which he has discovered in giving rein to his imaginative powers *are* his theology. . . . His mind works in parables and pictures, and each has its appointed place in his message of God to man." In any intellectual difficulty the Sâdhu feels that it is sufficient to find an apt parable drawn from everyday life ; in the presence of the vivid picture the keen intellect must lay down its arms. " When the Sâdhu has found an apposite picture for a spiritual experience, or for some Christian doctrine, his need of explanation is satisfied. Parable takes the place of logic. By means of a parable light is thrown upon a specific point ; the rest is left in darkness. But this does not prevent the Sâdhu from teaching something, in

another connection, which, strictly speaking, is left out of his picture." In his choice of the parable method Sundar Singh resembles the Old Testament Prophets and Jesus of Nazareth, as well as the greatest religious founder of his own country, Gautama Buddha. They all agree in this, that, in order to express and describe the mystery of religion, they use the intuitive language of parable and cast aside the conceptual apparatus of philosophical logic. With all of them the rejection of abstract teaching for the concreteness of the parable is conditioned by naïve concentration upon personal religious experience. The mastery of parabolic speech is in its essence the overflow of personal piety with a marked anti-intellectual bias.

Sundar Singh is an outstanding representative of a Christianity of personal experience. His basal thought, that the essence of the Christian life consists in personal experience, involving a thorough change of heart, conditions throughout his conceptions of God, Christ, and the Church. It is interesting to trace this basal idea through the whole range of his religious conceptions.

2. The Conception of God

Deus ineffabilis—this phrase, so much beloved of the mystics, characterises Sundar Singh's thought of God. The stress laid by the Sâdhu upon the Inconceivable and the Inexpressible in God stamps the Sâdhu as an ecstatic. When he speaks of the eternal mystery of Divine Reality, it is always with the sense of the utter impossibility of expressing this Reality in human speech. His consciousness of this Divine ἄρρητον is at its height when he returns to ordinary life from the world of ecstasy.

"At times the Lord filled my heart so full and spoke such wonderful words to me that I could not possibly speak about them; no, not even if I were to write volumes about them. For these heavenly things cannot be expressed in heavenly language; human speech is quite incapable of expressing them."

In the opinion of the Sâdhu, those Biblical writers who received a divine revelation "in the spirit," i.e. in ecstasy, were also painfully conscious that Heavenly Reality cannot be expressed in words. For "God has no speech," the *Deus absconditus* neither speaks nor can He be expressed in speech.

This hidden God, whom no human tongue can express, is an "abyss of love," or, as Sundar Singh says in a favourite Indian expression, an "ocean of love."

"We say in India: 'God is a vast ocean of love.' It is in this ocean that we ought to live. But sin draws us away from it. Still, God be praised that Christ can break the net of sin and lead us back into the ocean of God's Love."

Involuntarily this ocean draws all the currents of man's spiritual life into itself. But God does not only draw the human spirit to Himself, He is not only the goal of all human longing; in His infinite love He longs for the happiness of the beings He has created; love streams out from Him unceasingly; He bends down to men, lavishes kindness upon them and redeems them. The God of Neo-Platonic and of strictly Vedantic mysticism is the Source and the Magnet of the Universe, the object and the satisfaction of all spiritual longing; but He is not the loving, helpful Redeemer. He needs and desires nothing. He is as attractive and as impersonal as a mountain peak. On the other hand, the God of the Christian mystics, as well as of the Hindu *Bhakti* mystics, is personal Love, who needs to love mankind as much as mankind needs to love Him. The

love-relationship between God and man is no merely one-sided human thing, but a mutual relationship. Julian of Norwich says : " Our natural longing is to possess God, and it is God's inmost desire to possess us." Still more paradoxical is Meister Eckhart's way of expressing this thought : " It is much more necessary to Him to give to us than it is for us to receive from Him." Sundar Singh has expressed this fundamental idea of Christian mysticism very beautifully :

" God Himself is pleased when we pray. He rejoices in our worship. Yes, God and the soul long for each other. God needs our prayer, just as a mother does not feel well if her baby does not lie on her bosom and drink. God becomes richer because He gives to us what we need, just as we become richer by giving ourselves and all we have away to others."

Perfectly simply, like many non-Christian and Christian mystics, Sundar Singh often uses the image of motherhood to describe the Being of God, an idea which really expresses very beautifully that double love-relationship which exists between God and man. " God is our spiritual mother."

God is self-giving love ; love is His whole Being ; to use a favourite expression of Luther's, " He is nothing but sheer love and mercy."

" God's love is boundless, for He loves not only the good who believe in Him, but the evil who at present refuse to believe in Him. And God's love is selfless ; he who loves Him must also love the brethren and be loved by them."

Sundar Singh's thought of God as Pure Love drives the conception of a jealous, watchful, judging and revengeful God into the background. The polarisation of the Scriptural thought of God between wrath and love is absent from his idea of God. The prophets, Jesus, and Paul undoubtedly recognise both these elements in God ; in Him they see wrath and mercy,

anger and love — He is both Judge and Saviour, Avenger and Paraclete—in the language of the contemporary philosophy of Religion: *tremendum* and *fascinosum*. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy Throne; mercy and truth shall go before My Face." [1] It is, of course, true that in the New Testament writers ὀργή (wrath) is somewhat less prominent than the Divine ἀγάπη, but it never disappears entirely from the Gospel of Love; even in the Gospel of John we find μένει ἡ ὀργή.[2] It is not until we reach the First Epistle of John that we find that all traces of the idea of Divine wrath have disappeared; here at last we reach that profound simplicity which is summed up in the phrase "God is Love." In the history of the Christian conception of God ὀργή and ἀγάπη are perpetually at variance. Along an original line Luther strove to effect a reconciliation between these two ideas by making a distinction "between God and God," which he developed still further by the paradox of a "flight from God to God," from the "hidden" to the "revealed" God, from an angry God to a forgiving Saviour—taking refuge from His justice in His mercy.

In the mind of Luther this element of consuming wrath is no less essential to the Being of God than that self-giving, pardoning love which has evoked from him such a passion of gratitude. The God who pardons sinners is at the same time that majestic Being whose transcendent purity condemns and consumes sin. The Sâdhu has not grasped this polarisation of wrath and love as an essential part of the Divine Being and of His activity with the same clearness as Luther. It is true that sometimes he speaks in his sermons of God's judgment and of the Judgment Day. He strikes the eschatological note over and over again in his addresses;

[1] Psa. lxxxix. 14. [2] John iii. 36.

he also speaks of present judgment : " Indeed, my friends, there is a sense in which the Day of the Lord has already come, for even now we are being judged in the sight of God." Yet this idea of the judgment of God is countered by the thought of the automatic judgment of sin, in which the idea of condemnation is separated from the Divine Being. With peculiar tenacity and energy he has defended his experience of God as pure and utter Love against all the objections of Christian theologians.

God's Love is active everywhere, even in hell—so the Sâdhu was told in ecstasy. It is not God who judges, condemns and punishes a sinner ; " it is sin itself, which inevitably results in punishment in the life of him who has allowed it to dominate him."

" God does not judge sinners ; it is sin which judges them, and they must die in their sins. I am often asked : ' If God is Love, how can He condemn men to everlasting punishment ? ' I always reply : ' God has never sent anyone to hell, and He never will send anyone there ; it is sin which drives souls into hell.' Think of the fall of Judas Iscariot : when he had betrayed the Lord, neither Pilate, nor the High Priests, nor our dear Saviour, nor the Apostles, hanged him ; he hanged himself ; he committed suicide ; he died in his sins. This is the end of any man who lives in sin." " God does not hate sinners, but sinners on their side love sin and hate Christ." " God punishes no one. He condemns no one to hell . . . such a thought cannot be reconciled with the love of God, which Christ proclaims, and which reveals itself in Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross. No, the sinner condemns himself ; the slave of lust and of the world condemns himself to perdition. A man's heart may be in such a condition that it can only feel at home in hell—that is, outside the peace of Christ."

" In North India I was once staying with a great friend of mine, and we talked much about spiritual things. Just then a young man arrived who was to stay a week with my friend's son. As soon as he heard our conversation he became restless ; it was evident that he was feeling uneasy. He had come for a week's visit, but, after a few minutes, he asked for a time-table, to see how soon he could return home. My friend said : ' What is the matter ? Why ! you have scarcely arrived and now you want to go ! You were to be here for a week ; your room is ready for you and we all welcome you.' For some time the youth

was very unwilling to give the true reason, but eventually my friend discovered that that spiritual conversation to which he had listened for a few minutes had been most painful to him, and he felt as if a whole week of such talk would turn the house into an Inferno. Within half an hour he was out of the house. So it is with sinners in heaven—God is Love and wants to have us in His Presence. How could He keep His children away from Him? How could *He* want to send them to hell and leave them there? It is not God who sends the sinner to hell, it is his own sins. God allows everyone to come to heaven; indeed, He invites everyone most earnestly to come in. But sinners themselves feel that it is a torture to stay there; that is why they do not desire it. . . . God does not make their entrance into heaven either difficult or impossible. . . . No, it is their own inner attitude which makes it impossible for them to have any joy in eternal life."

Sundar Singh is deeply convinced that it is not God who judges a sinner, but his own sin. He supports this opinion by quoting the Gospel of John :

"I am not come to judge the world, but to redeem the world." "God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him." "He who believes not, is judged already."

It is quite true that such passages do appear to support Sundar's departure from orthodox Christian opinion. But Canon Streeter has pointed out, very truly, that the Sâdhu would scarcely have read this meaning into the Gospel of John if he had not already, without being conscious of it, come under the influence of the Indian doctrine of *Karma*. He rejects unhesitatingly the primitive Indian doctrine of the transmigration of souls. But the Sâdhu holds quite strongly and consistently the idea of a purely automatic penalty produced by sinful action, an idea which coincides with the Indian doctrine of *Karma*. One of the most ancient and fundamental ideas of the Upanishads is expressed in the phrases: "*Yathâkârî yathâcârî thatâ bhavati*"; "*Yat karma kurute tad abhisampadyate*" ("As a man lives, as are his actions, so his character

is formed" ; "According to his deeds shall it be unto him"). And the Taittirîya-Brâhmaṇa says still more plainly : "Brahma has nothing to do with Karma." These axioms still affect the Christian Sâdhu. It is not the Divine Judge who decides man's fate ; it is his own act. According to an immanent law, a sinful creature cannot do otherwise than remain at a distance from God—that is, in hell. In Sundar Singh's opinion the judgment of God consists in the fact that the sinner sees himself in the light of God's Presence, and this light convinces him of his sinful and lost condition. In a remarkable way the primitive thought of *Karma* is separated from the *Saṃsâra* conception and united with Johannine ideas—a clear example of a creative synthesis of Christian and Indian thought.

The absence of emphasis on the *tremendum* in his thought of God, and his strong emphasis on love in the Divine Being, naturally gives a static character to the Sâdhu's conception of God. The God who knows no flaming wrath is the *Deus semper quietus* of all mysticism, *Deus tranquillus tranquillans omnia :* "God is rest ; He is restful in all His works" ; "He works quietly and without disturbance." Because Sundar Singh finds his most satisfying experience of God in a state of profound peace, therefore he holds that the Eternal God, who reveals His Presence to him in this peace, can be nothing less than "very rest." That perfect stillness which surrounds the Brahma of the Upanishads and constitutes the Buddhist's Nirvâṇa also broods over and penetrates Sundar Singh's mystical conception of God.

3. The Creation

The Divine Essence is pure Love ; it is this Love which moved the infinite God to come forth from the

fullness of His Glory and Blessedness and bring into being a finite, created world. Sundar Singh lays renewed stress upon the great Christian idea, to which Aquinas gave classical form, that God created the world in order that other beings might become partakers of His Divine Nature (*Intendit solum communicare suam perfectionem, quae est eius bonitas*).

"God's aim in creation is not to make up for some lack in His Being, for He is perfect in Himself. He imparts life, because it is of the very essence of His nature to create. To give men real joy through His creative Presence is of the very essence of His Love."

The created world is not identical with God; the Sâdhu's conception of God is free from that pantheistic colour which characterises the cosmology of the Upanishads and of the Vedas.

"The Indian seer *lost* God in Nature; the Christian mystic, on the other hand, *finds* God in Nature. The Hindu mystic believes that God and Nature are one and the same; the Christian mystic knows that there must be a Creator to account for the universe."

In spite of this essential difference between God and Nature, the Sâdhu sees both to be united in indissoluble bonds; both the visible and the invisible world are a reflection of the infinite Being of God.

"There are countless beings in visible and in invisible worlds. Thus in countless ways God's infinite qualities are revealed. Each part, according to its own capacity, reflects one aspect of the nature of God."

Like a Platonist, the Sâdhu sees in the visible world a "copy of the invisible world," "the revelation of the spiritual world in material form." But he completes this Platonic conception by the Christian idea of revelation. He does not hesitate to draw a parallel between Nature and Holy Scripture.

This belief in the revelation of God in the natural

order gives to the Sâdhu that intense love of Nature which we find in so many Christian and non-Christian mystics. The numerous parables which he draws from natural life are a proof of the love with which he observes Nature, and of the way in which he lives in contact with it.

Especially tender is the tie which binds him to the animal world. Like Francis of Assisi and other Christian mystics, even in the life of animals he sees the reflex of the Divine Love. Once when he was in Switzerland a cat nestled confidingly on his lap ; he welcomed it tenderly, saying : " If the love of such a little creature is so great, how much greater must be the love of the Creator." Because even animals reveal the love of God, they also are God's children, the little brothers and sisters of mankind.

" St. Francis used to preach to the birds and the animals and to call them his brothers and sisters. And truly they are our brothers and sisters, for they have received the gift of life from the same Giver."

Yet wonderful as is God's revelation in Nature, to him, as to all mystics, the revelation of God in the depths of the human soul is something infinitely greater.

" One day I found a flower, and I began to reflect on its fragrance and its beauty. As I brooded over this, I saw the hidden mystery of the Creator behind His creation. This filled me with joy. But my joy was still greater when I found Him at work within my own soul."

In the thought of the Sâdhu man is a microcosm, a reflection of the macrocosm ; he is therefore the highest form of God's revelation. Man alone is able to behold God's revelation in Nature, the mirror of His infinite perfection.

" Man is part of the universe; he is a mirror in which this is reflected. Therefore both the visible and the invisible creation are

reflected within him. In this world he is the one being who can understand the visible creation. He is, as it were, the language of Nature. Nature speaks, but without words. Man expresses these inarticulate murmurs of Nature in human speech."

So creation is a kind of ladder by which men rise to an ever clearer vision of the perfection, the beauty, and the love of God. Sundar Singh would endorse the words of St. Bonaventura :

"All created things lead the reflective and contemplative soul to the Eternal God, for they are the outer court of His Temple of Creation, filled with echoes, pictures, and living representations of the Divine activity."

4. The Living Christ

God reveals Himself through the whole of the visible and invisible world. And yet the God of revelation is always the invisible God. No one, not even the glorified in heaven, can see this invisible God as He is. Through all eternity He is invisible.

"When I entered heaven for the first time I looked all round me and then I asked : 'Where is God ?' and they answered and said unto me : 'God is seen here as little as on earth, for God is infinite. But Christ is here, He is the image of the Invisible God, and only in Him can anyone see God, either here or upon earth.'"

In this experience of ecstasy the mysterious relationship between the God who is "most hidden and most manifest" is wonderfully expressed. "No man has seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In Christ, the personal Saviour, the Redeemer who has become man, we are able to grasp this deep mystery of eternal Love. In Christ the Infinite comes down to the level of His needy creature ; in Him He turns His Face towards seeking humanity, and this Face is a

human face full of gentleness and kindness, glorified always by a smile of love. This Face which, to use a wonderful expression of Luther's, is "a Mirror of the Father's Mercy," the Sâdhu saw with his bodily eyes in a vision at his conversion, and he sees It with his spiritual eyes whenever he is allowed to enter heaven in the experience of ecstasy. Only in and through Christ, and never apart from Him, does the Sâdhu find possible any experience of God, any knowledge of God, any sight of God and of His love. The knowledge of God through Nature also is only possible through the indwelling of Christ the Logos in the soul. God is in Christ, God is Christ, and Christ is God, "all in all." "Christ is my Redeemer, He is my Life, He is all to me in heaven and upon earth." Sundar Singh's piety is Christocentric through and through. Again and again we are reminded of Martin Luther, who, with the same decision (although often with polemical vigour), defends the idea that faith in God and faith in Christ are identical.

"We do not know God apart from Christ." God is Love only when "we see Him in the Person of Christ." "He has revealed Himself nowhere excepting in Him, in such a way that we can see His Heart and His Will." "Let no one persuade thee that thou canst find God anywhere save in the Lord Christ, and see that thou have no other thoughts but Him. . . . Shut thine eyes and say: 'I will know no other God save my Lord Christ.'"

A finite creature cannot behold the eternal God face to face without being destroyed in this fiery sea of power and glory; he cannot see and understand the infinite God in "His naked majesty." That is why God clothed Himself with a human form, showed Himself in human guise, took upon Himself the likeness of man. Christ speaks to the Sâdhu, who is "sitting at the Master's Feet":

"In order to guide men into the right way I could find no better means for my revelation than for the sake of man to become man, in order that man might understand that God is not a strange, terrible Power, but that He is Love, and that He is like man who was created in His image." "Man has a natural longing to see God; we desire to see Him whom we try to honour; He alone is infinite. I asked the heathen: 'Why do you worship these idols?' They replied: 'God is infinite, and these images are only to help us to collect our thoughts. With the help of these symbols we can worship, we can understand a little.' We would like to speak with Him we love; we long to see Him. The difficulty is this: we human creatures cannot see Him, because He is infinite. If we could become infinite we could see Him. Here and now we are incapable of seeing Him, our Creator, our Father, the Giver of Life. That is why He became flesh; He took a human, limited form in order that men might thus be able to behold Him."

Once again this experience of the Sâdhu is illuminated by Luther's Christological declarations, which are closely related to the thoughts of the mediæval mystics, especially to those of Suso. The eternal Divine Substance—which Luther calls the *Deus absolutus*, the *Deus nudus*, the *Deus absconditus*—is entirely invisible and inaccessible by the human spirit. "God dwells in Light unapproachable." Between the Divine Essence and human nature is an impassable gulf. The soul that attempts to know God in its own strength is shattered by the terrible glory of the vision. By his own efforts sinful man can never find his way to the Eternal God. But God's inmost essence is pure friendliness and mercy; and God desires that man should look right into His Heart. So He adapts Himself to man's comprehension; He comes down from heaven, veils Himself in a modest *involucrum*, offers Himself in a simple parable (*similitudo*), places before man an image of Himself (*imago sui*), gives him a *symbolum* of His incomprehensible wisdom and love, a shelter (*umbraculum*) which shields him from the burning rays of the Divine midday Sun. The *Deus nudus* thus becomes the *Deus involutus*, the *Deus absolutus*

gives place to the *Deus incarnatus*, the *Deus absconditus* to the *Deus revelatus*.

Upon this homely veil, through which God reveals Himself—upon the Son of the Virgin lying in a manger, upon the Man of Sorrows hanging upon the Cross—must the man who is seeking God fasten his gaze, for in these pictures (*imagines*), in these "Symbols" (as Luther distinctly says), "man finds the God whom he can bear, One who comforts him, restores him, and redeems him." Thus it is the Incarnate Son of God "who paints for us the Father's heart and will" (*pingit*). "He is that veil (*involucrum* [1]) beneath which the Divine Majesty offers Himself with all His gifts, that every poor sinner may dare to approach Him in the certainty of finding God."

"The mystery of the God-Man," of the "Incarnate God," of whom Luther has given such a clear theological presentation, is expressed by Sundar Singh in a series of vivid parables, which form his apologetic for the Christian dogma of the Incarnation.

"Some years ago I saw how a simple countryman was being shown a red glass bottle filled with milk. They asked him what was in the bottle. He said: 'Wine, brandy, whisky.' He could not believe that it was filled with milk until he saw the milk being poured out from it, because he could not see the white colour of the milk owing to the redness of the glass. . . . So it is with the Person of the Saviour. He became Man and His Godhead was hidden in His Humanity. People saw Him tired, hungry and thirsty, and they said: 'If He is God, why is He tired, hungry and thirsty, and why does He pray to God?' They saw only His human side, and could not believe that He was really Divine. But those who followed Him and lived with Him knew that He was more than human and that He was God."

"Some years ago in Tibet I heard a story about a King who wished to send a message to his people. He entrusted the errand to his servants, but they would not do as he wished. The King, who loved his subjects, now resolved to take the message to them himself in order to be convinced of their difficulties. He could not go there as a king, for he wanted

[1] *Lit.* wrapper, covering, case.

his subjects to speak to him freely of all their sufferings and distresses. So he changed his garments, left off his royal robes, and dressed himself like a poor man. Then he went right among his people and said to them : ' I have been sent by the King in order to learn about all your difficulties.' The poor and the distressed had confidence in him and told him all their anxieties, and he saw how he could help them. But there were also some proud people who could not bring themselves to believe that such a poor man was really the King's messenger, so they were rude to him and chased him away. Later on the King came to his subjects at the head of his army in all his royal state, and the people could hardly recognise him again nor believe that it was the same person. They said : ' Then he was a poor man and now he is King.' The proud who had despised him were punished and thrown into prison, but those who had been good to him were honoured and their wants relieved. Even so is it with the Word of Life who became man ; His people did not see His Glory, and they crucified Him. But the days are coming when we shall see Him in His Glory, and we shall know that He is the same Jesus Christ who lived like a poor man for three-and-thirty years upon this earth."

Belief in the Incarnation is not difficult for Sundar Singh. The Hindu faith in the various kinds of *avatâra* (descents) of a Saviour-deity, and also the faith in the divinity of the *Guru*, which is especially emphasised in the Sikh religion, was indeed a preparation for the full Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. That which was most abhorrent to him during the critical period which preceded his conversion was the Christian message of the Saviour's sacrificial death upon Golgotha.

" As long as I was a Hindu I could not understand how it was possible for God to give life through the death of Christ." " The message of the Cross was foolishness to my understanding." " But as I learnt to know the Love of God, and as this love streamed into my heart, then my understanding was opened."

That Sundar Singh regards the Death of Jesus as a real atonement is shown very clearly in an address he gave in South India.

" Christ reconciled us to God ; on the Cross one Hand was uplifted towards God ; this bleeding Hand showed that the satisfaction was

complete, and through the blood the atonement. The other Hand was stretched out towards sinners and declared that now men could draw near to God. Both Hands proclaimed the same thing. . . . Since this reconciliation or atonement has been completed there is no more separation from God."

For the Sâdhu, however, the deepest mystery of the death of Christ upon the Cross does not consist in substitutionary atonement, but in the revelation of that Divine love which gives itself completely to man.

"Christ knew that neither silver nor gold, nor diamonds nor any other jewels, would suffice to procure life to the soul, but that what was needed was the surrender of life for life, the surrender of soul in order to save the souls of men. That is why He gave His life for the redemption of the world." "Christ came in order to reveal the true boundless love of the Father which had been hidden from all eternity, and through the surrender of His life to save all souls, not only the souls of the good, but especially of sinners. Further, He came to show through His Death and Resurrection that what the world considers real death is not death at all, but the fountain of Life."

Once more vivid stories and parables help the Sâdhu to understand this unfathomable love of God.

"Some time ago I saw in the Himalayas two villages which were separated from each other by a high and impassable mountain. As the crow flies, the distance between the two villages was not great, but as travellers had to go right round the mountain the journey used to take a whole week. A man who lived in one of these villages got the idea that if it was impossible to make a path *over* the mountain one must be made *through* it. He resolved to risk his life in carrying out the idea. . . . He started the work, but shortly before the tunnel was completed he was killed. He sacrificed his life in the endeavour to unite the two villages. This made me think of the wall of partition made by sin which separates man from God, and this story seemed to me a parable showing how Jesus Christ had made a way through the mountain of sin by giving up His life for us."

"Several years ago I was travelling in Bhutan in the Himalayas. I spoke to the people about Jesus Christ, and laid stress on the fact that our salvation depended upon His death, the death which He suffered for us. Many of them said: 'It is unthinkable that through the death of one many can be saved.' But a certain young man said: 'No, it is both possible and true; I can say that because I have experienced it

myself.' I thought he was a Christian, but he knew nothing of Christ. I asked him about his experience, upon which he told me the following story: 'Three months ago I was travelling in the mountains when suddenly I fell down the mountain side. I was so much injured that I almost bled to death. My father carried me to a doctor, who, after a careful examination, declared that he could do nothing for me. "If his bones were broken," he said, "I could do something for him. If he had an illness I could give him medicine. But he has lost his blood. The life of the body is in the blood; if we lose our blood we lose our life; I cannot give the patient any blood, so I cannot help him." When my father asked if there were nothing at all to be done for me, he said at last: "Yes, if there were someone who was willing to give his blood—that is, some of it—for him, I could save him." My father, who loved me wonderfully, said at once that he was ready to do this. A vein was opened and my father's blood flowed into my body. But as my father was an old man, the operation was too much for his strength; he was so exhausted that he died, but I was saved. So,' said the young man as he finished his tale, 'my father died for me. Because he loved me beyond measure he gave his life for me.' I was then able to explain to him the meaning of the death of Christ on the basis of this experience. 'Just as you fell down from the mountain,' I observed, 'and through your injuries lost your blood, so we fell by our sin from the heights of communion with God and lost our true life, which is spiritual. But Christ died for us on the Cross, He poured out His blood for us "whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in His sight." Those who believe in Him know from their own experience that Christ came into the world to save sinners.'"

"Once when I was travelling about in the Himalayas I saw something which made the love of God very real to me. In a Tibetan village I noticed a crowd of people standing under a burning tree and looking up into the branches. I came near and discovered in the branches a bird which was anxiously flying round a nest full of young ones. The mother-bird wanted to save her little ones, but she could not. When the fire reached the nest the people waited breathlessly to see what she would do. No one could climb the tree, no one could help her. Now she could easily have saved her own life by flight, but instead of fleeing she sat down on the nest, covering the little ones carefully with her wings. The fire seized her and burnt her to ashes. She showed her love to her little ones by giving her life for them. If, then, this little insignificant creature had such love, how much more must our Heavenly Father love His children, the Creator love His creatures!"

The Cross of Christ stands before the eyes of Sundar Singh as the supreme revelation of the Divine Love. But this revelation of love is in no wise limited to

Christ's death upon Golgotha ; it takes in the whole of Christ's life, from the birth in Bethlehem to the last prayer upon the Cross. "*Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium*"—this deep thought of the *Imitatio Christi* appears again and again in the Sâdhu's thought.

"Christ hung thirty-three years upon the cross." Christ speaks to the Sâdhu in ecstasy : "When I became man and took upon Myself the heavy cross for the redemption of mankind I carried it not only during the six hours of my Crucifixion, or during the three years of My public ministry, but during the whole thirty-three years of My life."

According to the peculiar conception of the Sâdhu this lifelong suffering of Christ was due to the fact that He, the eternal Son of God, had to live in an essentially strange world, in the impure atmosphere of sin.

Christ speaks : "As it is difficult for a clean person to spend even a few moments in a dirty, evil-smelling place, so for those who live in communion with Me it is extremely repugnant to have to live among sinful men. Think, then, how hard and painful it was for Me, who am Holy, and the source of Holiness, to have to live more than thirty-three years among sinners. It is beyond human understanding to grasp this."

Sundar Singh sees the utmost height of suffering in Christ's desolation upon the Cross, which, unlike many Christian thinkers, he does not attempt to explain away, but takes quite literally.

"Not only the world forsook our dear Lord, but at the time of His death His heavenly Father left Him alone too, in order that He might win for us the victory upon the Cross."

To the Sâdhu, Jesus Christ is Redeemer and Mediator, in the true sense of the word. He has definitely rejected the conception of liberal theology, according to which Jesus of Nazareth preached a Gospel without a mediator and taught the direct access of the human soul to the Father.

"Neither Greek nor Indian philosophy has taught us anything about our heavenly Father. Buddha, who was a great teacher, never mentioned the Father. Therefore it is foolish to say that men can find God without Christ."

The parable of the Prodigal Son, which is the favourite argument of modern theology against the traditional doctrine of redemption, is to the Sâdhu a proof of the necessity of a mediator. Paul Wernle says very decidedly (and from the purely historical standpoint possibly he is right): "In the parable of the Prodigal Son there is neither mediator nor atonement; in the Lord's Prayer in the petition for forgiveness neither 'in the name of Jesus' nor 'for the sake of the blood'; he who adds this element destroys the primitive purity of the message. . . . The hunger for objective guarantees to which the soul can cling is far from Jesus. He always gives us something far better, God Himself, as Father, *immediately* laid hold of and held fast." In a remarkable way the Sâdhu tries to parry this attack with the parable itself. Even if his exegesis is historically dubious, it is still very suggestive, and for the systematic treatment of the question it is significant.

"One day a pastor came to me and said: 'Think about the parable of the Prodigal Son. He needed no mediator, no redeemer. He went direct to the Father.' Then I said to him: 'You must notice that the Prodigal Son was already in union with his father; it was not so very long since he had gone away from the father. He knew the way back, for he had lived with his father before. Therefore he needed no one to show him the way home. This parable applies to Christians. It is quite possible that some of them become careless in their spiritual life, and for a time are out of touch with the Lord, but they know the way back. The parable does not refer to the heathen, nor to the many nominal Christians, who do not know the way to the Father.'"

(The weakness of this exposition lies in this: it misses the main point of the parable, and puts the

emphasis upon an unimportant detail. The decisive thing in the parable—and it *is* a parable, not an allegorical narrative—is not the fact that the son found his way home, but the joyful welcome which he received, and the way in which he was honoured before the elder son who stayed at home and did his duty.)

Christ's life upon earth is for the Sâdhu an absolute historical reality. His birth in the stable at Bethlehem, His wanderings through Palestine, His death on Golgotha, are to him facts in the complete literal sense. To relegate the "story of salvation" to the psychological and metaphysical realm, as we know so many Christian mystics do, is quite foreign to him. The Jesus of Nazareth who wandered about the land of Palestine is identical with the Eternal Son of God and Saviour who appeared to him at his conversion, and in whose heaven he is allowed to spend hours of ecstasy again and again. The intensity with which he longed to visit the homeland of Jesus, and the deep love which filled him when he actually stood at the Holy Places, show how entirely naïve is the faith of the Sâdhu, completely unaffected by problems of Biblical criticism. His heart beat faster when he realised that the same Saviour with whom he is in such close touch through prayer had trodden these very fields during the time of His earthly pilgrimage.

But in spite of this childlike faith which never dreams of loosening or breaking the connection between the Historical Jesus and the Eternal Christ, the Sâdhu is free from that crude realism which characterises the "religious-historical" theories of so many present-day theologians. This is shown by his tender spiritual conception of the Sacrificial Death of Christ, which is in strong contrast to the crude Blood-theology of so many Western Christians. Sundar Singh does not

hesitate to speak of "the spiritual eternal blood of Christ" which alone possesses redeeming power.

"In answer to the pointed question of a Swiss theologian: 'How do you explain the verse *The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*?' the Sâdhu answered: 'In the spiritual sense. This cleansing can only take place through faith. . . . Everything depends upon faith. It is not the wood of the cross which has wonderful power to heal from sin, but what happens is like the story of the brazen serpent: those who looked up to it were healed and those who despised it and denied its power died. Everything depends upon obedience and faith. Cleansing from sin is the answer to the faith of those who look up to the Redeemer on the Cross.' To Canon Streeter Sundar Singh said: "The Atonement and the Blood which washes us from our sins means that we are grafted into Christ, I in Him and He in me. The branch which is grafted into the tree is bitter, but once it is ingrafted the sweet sap of the tree flows into the branch and makes it sweet."

Still more important than this spiritual tendency of the Sâdhu is the fact that his faith in Christ swings equally between the two poles of the complete idea of Christ: the Christ of History in the past and the Living Christ in the present day. Once in time God became man; He broke through into space and time in a single human personality, veiled in humble human form, in Jesus of Nazareth. But this Jesus of Nazareth does not belong to the past; no, as the Living Christ He is unceasingly conveying divine power and love to sinful human souls. "Christ lives actually amongst us, just as He did more than nineteen hundred years ago." The revelation of the Living Christ, not the story of the Historical Jesus, made the Sâdhu His disciple.

"When people ask me, 'What made you a Christian?' I can only say: 'Christ Himself made me a Christian.' When He revealed Himself to me I saw His glory and was convinced that He was the Living Christ." "I do not believe in Jesus Christ because I have read about Him in the Bible—I saw Him and experienced Him and know Him in my daily experience." "Not because I read the Gospels, but because of Him

of whom I read in the Gospels, have I become what I am." "Already before my conversion I loved His teaching; it is beautiful. But my doubts were not swept away until I became aware that Christ was alive."

From his own personal experience the Sâdhu never tires of emphasising the truth that Christ is no mere historical personality of whom the New Testament tells us, but "a living reality, which must be experienced," a continually operative power which must grip the heart of man. "To be a Christian means to receive Christ into one's soul." "The Bible tells us about Jesus Christ, but He does not live in these pages but in our hearts." Just because the decisive element is contact with the living Christ, the "plan of salvation" can never be of the essence of the Christian Faith. It is not the knowledge of certain historical facts which leads to inward fellowship with Christ, but it is the other way round: heart-fellowship with Christ is the indispensable preliminary to a right understanding of the plan of salvation. "Christianity is founded upon the Living Christ, who is ever with us."

"Of course one has to know the Bible. I love the Bible, for it is that which has led me to the Saviour, to the Saviour who is independent of history. For history tells of time, but Christ speaks to us of Eternity. . . . From the standpoint of history it is important to know the Bible. But even if the Bible were to disappear no one could take away my peace; I would still have my Christ. The Bible has taught me much about Christ. The great historical fact is Christ Himself."

In answer to the question, "In what sense do you understand the Resurrection? Do you regard it as a fact which took place two thousand years ago, or as something which still has a meaning for each one of us?" the Sâdhu replied: "It is a living fact. If Christ did not die, and if He were not now alive, Christianity could offer nothing to the world of any

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more value than other religions. It is the Living Christ who makes Christianity."

"An Indian Christian who had travelled a great deal said once: 'I saw the grave of Mohammed. It was magnificent, adorned with diamonds and other jewels. And people told me: "Here rest the bones of Mohammed." I saw Napoleon's grave, and they told me: "Here rest the bones of Napoleon." But when I saw the tomb of Christ it was empty; there were no bones therein.' Christ is the living Christ. The Holy Sepulchre has stood empty for nearly two thousand years. My heart too stands open to the Lord. He lives in me; He is the Living Christ because He goes on living in the lives of Christians. True Christians are not those who say they are Christians, but those who possess Christ."

"Many Christians are like Mary, who loved Jesus and who went to see Him in His grave when He was already risen from the dead. She loved Jesus with her whole heart, and yet, when she saw Him outside the tomb, she did not recognise Him. Her sight was blinded by tears; it was as though there were a mist before her eyes which prevented her from seeing Him. It is the same with many Christians; they love Jesus without seeing in Him the Saviour who is risen from the dead, the Living Christ. They cannot see Him on account of the mists of sin and error; their eyes are blinded with tears of sorrow. But when they open their hearts to Christ, then they recognise Him."

In this emphasis on the eternal aspect of the whole story of redemption the Sâdhu is once more in line with Luther. Luther never tires of impressing the truth that the Divine Act of Redemption is an eternal deed, "an everlasting Now," not a mere historical fact, but something which "from all eternity was operative in the secret counsel of God," that from all eternity, "before the foundation of the world," Christ is the Lamb who has been slain for the sins of the world.

Sundar Singh says:

"Gold, silver and diamonds were hidden in the earth long before anyone knew of their existence. So the fathomless mine of the Divine Love existed long before Jesus, the Incarnate Love, revealed to the world the 'unspeakable riches' of the Divine Reality."

To Luther, Redemption is an eternal, inwardly Divine Fact which only becomes "visible" through the his-

torical facts of the Birth, Death and Resurrection of Christ, and, to use his own words, "It is not simply a sweet song of a story of things which happened fifteen hundred years ago, but . . . it is a present and a love-gift which remains for ever."

Sundar Singh, however, goes further than this. Like many Christian mystics, he regards the working of Christ in the individual human soul as on a higher plane than His activity during His appearance upon earth. Not history, but the deep inward life, is Christ's peculiar sphere of revelation, His most sacred sphere of activity. "The heart is the throne of the King of Kings."

In ecstasy Sundar Singh heard the word of Christ: "The womb of the Virgin in which in human form I spent many months was not so sacred a spot as the heart of the believer in which I have My dwelling for ever and which I make a heaven."

We are reminded here of similar thoughts of mediæval mystics which are re-echoed in Luther's Christmas Sermons.

Meister Eckhart writes: "The birth of the Divine in a virgin or pure soul is worth more to God than the actual birth at Bethlehem." Luther says: "The Babe shall be more thine than He is the Son of Mary." "For if He were born a thousand times, yea and hundreds of thousands of times and were not born *in us*, it would profit us nothing."

This effort to pass from the historical facts of redemption into the sphere of immediate, personal assurance does not imply that we explain the historical facts in a purely subjective sense; still less does it imply a denial of their objective reality; it means rather the attempt to ascend from the level of mere intellectual assent to that of inmost personal inner experience, from the past to the immediate present, from the sphere of space and time to that of eternal Divine Reality.

Christ lives and works eternally; but this eternal

Christ is none other than He who walked this earth. In a beautiful passage the Sâdhu expresses the age-long Christian conviction that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Christ speaks: "With the same finger with which I wrote the condemnation of Belshazzar upon the wall, I wrote upon the ground the hidden sins of those men who, blind to their own sin, would have condemned the woman whom they caught in the act of adultery, so that one by one they crept quietly away feeling ashamed and guilty. With the same finger I still show My servants in the stillness of their own hearts the wounds made by their sins. And with the same finger I heal them when they repent. With the same finger I will lead My children out of this world into the other, into their home of rest and eternal peace, and they will cling to Me as little children cling to their father's hand wherever he goes."

In all his public work Sundar Singh lays great stress upon the Deity of Christ: faith in the Living Christ as Saviour and Lord; and the reason for this is clear. Compared with personal spiritual contact with an eternal Divine Saviour, admiration for the human Jesus as a religious Teacher and a moral Example seems something very poor and meagre. When he was in Europe, therefore, the Sâdhu did not hesitate to criticise quite freely that modern rationalistic conception of Jesus as an ethical teacher which threatens to sweep away the essential character of the Christian religion; indeed, he threw the whole weight of his personal experience of Christ into the scales against it.

"There are many people who never come into personal contact with Christ at all," and "who never enjoy the unspeakable preciousness of personal communion and friendship with Him; they know Christ only from theology or from the standpoint of history." "Therefore they can only regard Him as a holy man, a moral teacher of great eloquence and magnetism, or perhaps as an outstanding religious genius." "They know Him as the good Master, they honour His beautiful character and His purity; but they cannot believe in His Divinity. They cannot see in Him the Divine Redeemer. But to those who desire it and ask for it God will give the power to see this truth."

"Christ did not come to teach us, but to redeem us from sin and punishment. Simply by His teaching He could not have redeemed sinners; He had to lay down His life." "Christ does not only speak of spiritual gifts, He gives them to us." "He did not merely teach Love; He completed His teaching by laying down His life." "Christ does not so much desire to be an example, as to live in us; He wants to be in us the source of a new life." "It is not true to say, as some do: Christ is only a great man, a prophet, He cannot help us. No, He is our Saviour who is with us till the end of the world. We can say: He saves sinners both from within and from without, from within by giving us a new life, from without because He protects us and defends us, and at last leads us into our heavenly home." "A merely great man could never say: 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Christ alone could say that; He came down from heaven; He is not far away; He is with us." "Ask those who live with Him who Jesus Christ is. The Living Christ has so wonderfully changed the whole tone of their lives that even upon earth they are already in heaven."

"The Deity of Christ and Redemption are absolutely fundamental truths. Without them Christianity has no message left; it is then no more than a system of ethics like Buddhism. You cannot find a better moral character than Buddha, yet his soul was never satisfied." "I have studied Hinduism; I believe that if we receive Christ's outward person only, and reject His innermost being—His Deity—our Christianity will be no better than Hinduism. You can call it what you will—rationalism, New Theology, New Religion—it is useless, it is worse than heathenism."

Like all great Christian personalities, Sundar Singh is a passionate defender of the Deity of Christ. The way in which he defends this central truth of Christianity brings him once more very near to Luther. The latter can never express too strongly his conviction that Christ is the Saviour-God from whom come forgiveness and salvation; He is therefore no mere human example for external imitation. "This is why," says Luther, "those who attack and deny the Deity of Christ lose the whole of Christianity and become no better than Turks and heathen."

But Sundar Singh's "Christological" ideas differ from Luther's Christology in the stress he lays upon communion with Christ through prayer. The word of

Scripture is not enough ; the Bible alone can lead no one to faith in Christ. Guru Nânak has said : " The *paṇḍita* (the learned) read the *purâṇa* (the holy writings), but they do not know how to find God in their own hearts." Sundar Singh says the same thing about many Christians in their relation to the Bible : " Many Christians cannot find Christ's precious life-giving Presence as a reality, because Christ lives only in their heads or in their Bibles, and not in their hearts." Only he who receives Christ into his heart in prayer can become really convinced of His Divinity. Only he who has come into living touch with Christ through prayer, and experienced something of His mercy and His power, and who knows Him " personally "—he alone is in a position to believe that this Saviour is the same as the Man who once lived and suffered in Palestine.

" All those who live with Him in prayer know that He is the Incarnate God who came into the world to save sinners." " No one can understand who Jesus Christ is save those who live with Him. Only when we live with Him in real communion can He show Himself to us." " There is a great difference between those who know something about Him and those who know Him for themselves." " To know about things which have some relation to Christ is useless ; we must know Him Himself. We can understand what people say about Him in books, but we can only learn to know Him personally through prayer. I also knew things about Him, but that was all no good. Only when I began to pray did He reveal Himself to me."

Christ speaks : " If you talk with a man who has been born blind about different colours—red, blue, yellow, and their variations—he has no conception of their glory and beauty, and he is quite unable to value them, for he only knows about them ; he knows their different names, it is true, but he can never have a true idea of the various colours until his eyes are opened. In fact, the colours are quite remote from his experience. Even so is it with the eyes of the spirit. A man may be as learned as possible : but until he has received his spiritual sight he cannot know Me, nor see My glory, nor understand that I am the Incarnate God."

" With our eyes we can see many things ; we can see the drops which

are used to heal our eyes; they are in a glass. But when they have been put into our eyes we see them no longer. We feel that they have done us good, but we see them no more. So a person can say: I have medicine in my eyes and cannot see it. When Christ was in Palestine in human form many people saw Him; but to-day when He lives in our hearts we cannot see Him. Like a medicine He cleanses our spiritual faculty of sight from every kind of sin. Although we cannot see Him, He redeems us; we know this, for we feel God's Presence in our lives. We cannot say that we feel this with the bodily senses; this consciousness is no emotion, no agitation; when I say *feeling* I mean that we become aware of Christ's Presence in a real and inward way."

Thus, faith in the Divinity of Christ grows out of the immediate experience of the heart. He who has learnt to be at home with the eternal Saviour in prayer, he who has been allowed to behold the loving human Face of Christ in prayer, is in a position to affirm this tremendous paradox: that the eternal Saviour-God, the Redeemer of the soul of man, descended from His infinite abode into the finite realm of time and space. But it is not for us to remain on earth with the Incarnate Son, we must ascend into heaven. As to the great Apostle of the Nations, who saw the Face of the glorified Lord on the way to Damascus, so also to Sundar Singh the words apply: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him no more. . . . Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

As the Sâdhu's Christology is conditioned by his personal experience, so also is his conception of the Trinity. The purely metaphysical conception of the Trinity which became the accepted idea in the Catholic Church deals only with the mystery of relationship within the Godhead. According to Catholic doctrine the external activity of God is all one, and the works of redemption and sanctification are only "attributed" to the Son and to the Spirit. The older (and to put it better, still undeveloped) conception of the Trinity, on the

contrary, is that of the "economy of salvation," which sees the historical revelation of God in the Son, and the working of the Spirit in the individual soul. Sundar Singh, who knows nothing of these theological refinements, has unconsciously adopted this latter conception as his own. He clothes his conception of the Trinity in a beautiful parable which was used by Sabellius in the early Church :

> Christ speaks to him : "I and the Father and the Spirit are one, as both heat and light are in the sun, although light is not heat and heat is not light. Both are one, but their revelation outside the sun takes place in very different ways. In the same way I and the Holy Spirit who proceed from the Father give light and heat to the world. The baptismal fire of the Spirit burns up all kinds of sin and evil in the hearts of believers, and prepares them for heaven through this work of cleansing and sanctification. I am the True Light ; I draw sinners out of the abyss of darkness, guide them in the right way and lead them into the bliss of heaven. Yet we are not three, but one—as the sun is one, not three." The Sâdhu develops the thought still further : "When I sit in the sun I do not enjoy first the heat and then the light, I enjoy them both at once. No one can, however, say that the sun's heat and light are one and the same thing. The sun can warm men and Nature, while its rays are hidden behind clouds. In cold winter weather the sun can shine clearly without giving any heat. Light and heat are not the same. But usually when the sun pours its rays upon us we feel both light and heat."

This parable in particular shows the Sâdhu's genius for making the deepest mysteries of the Christian Faith clear and vivid.

5. Salvation

"Christ reflects the brightness of God's glory, and it is in His likeness that God created man. He is the true Mirror of the Divine ; in all other men this reflection is confused and dim." In the sinner this likeness of the Eternal Creator is disfigured and stained, but it is still there. Even a degraded man bears traces

of Divine nobility within his soul. Sin seems to destroy this Divine likeness, yet in itself sin has no existence.

"Sin has no independent existence; no one can say, therefore, that it is something which has been created. It is only a name for a state of mind, or a disposition. There is only one Creator and He is good, and a good Creator cannot create anything evil; for that would be to contradict His own being. Further, there can be no other being who has created anything apart from the Creator. Satan can only injure that which has already been created; he has no power to create. Sin, therefore, is neither part of creation nor has it an independent existence. It is only a state of mind which leads to error and destruction. For instance, light has a real existence, while darkness is only the absence of light. Sin or evil, therefore, has no independent existence; it is merely the absence or the negation of good." "Sin is the name for that act of self-will which deliberately opposes the Will of God."

It is indeed surprising to come across the Neo-Platonic doctrine of sin which was accepted by Origen, Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and Julian of Norwich in the religious thought-world of this "naïve" Indian Christian disciple. Not only the terminology, but the symbolism of light and darkness belong to that school of Neo-Platonic mysticism which was absorbed by Christianity.

In another beautiful parable Sundar Singh tries to show that in itself sin does not exist; it is simply an interruption of the normal life of communion with God.

"One day while I was travelling from America to Australia there was no wireless news; a storm had so disturbed the atmosphere that no message could get through. In the same way sin disturbs the spiritual atmosphere, so that we cannot hear the voice of God."

But although the Sâdhu's doctrine of sin is coloured by the negative conceptions of mystical theology, his doctrine of salvation is evangelical through and through. The problem of sin and grace is for him the central problem of Christianity.

"Jesus Christ saves His people from their sins: this is the very heart of Christianity. Those who believe in Him He frees from guilt by the gift of forgiveness; and He frees them from the dominion of sin by enabling them to overcome it."

The hymn in praise of *gratia sola*, which was sung by Augustine and renewed by Luther, resounds fully and clearly in the preaching of the Sâdhu. Salvation is the pure, undeserved, unmerited gift and grace of God.

"I can testify, from my own experience, that peace of heart can never be attained by our own efforts; on the contrary, we must receive it from Jesus Christ Himself through prayer."

With an energy that reminds us of Luther, the Sâdhu declares again and again in his addresses that we can never achieve salvation, forgiveness, justification in the sight of God, or true peace, by any effort of our own. In his youth he learnt from bitter experience that salvation cannot be attained by the most strenuous self-activity.

"It is impossible for us to achieve our own salvation. . . . Good ethical teaching sounds well, but it accomplishes nothing. A fish which has been caught in a net can see a certain distance before it; it can even move about a little, but it is still a prisoner. . . . If it tries to work its way out, it realises still more painfully that it is a prisoner. My studies broadened my mind, but in spite of everything I discovered that I was caught in the net of sin. I am not alone in feeling this; I have met many, many Indians who had forsaken the world, who were living in caves in the jungle where they were striving with all their might to find the way to spiritual freedom; but all their efforts were fruitless. They only became more deeply entangled in the net. . . . Many of them, however, went on seeking until they found Christ. . . . Christ broke the fetters of sin, and they were free."

Christ speaks: "The fig-leaves were not sufficient to cover Adam and Eve. Therefore God gave them coats of skins. In the same way good works do not suffice to save men from the wrath to come. Nothing will avail save the robe of My righteousness."

"Many people, especially those who have not received the Saviour, say: 'Do good, and you will be saved.' But, to be quite frank, those of us who sought salvation along our own lines and in our own strength

have to confess that we failed entirely in our quest. A person who says 'a man can save himself,' is like a man standing by a well with a rope in his hand, saying to a poor wretch who has fallen down the well, 'Come and take hold of the rope, and I will save you.' But the man who is in the well says very naturally: 'If I were able to climb out by myself, of course I should need no rope. What a fool you are to stand there and talk like that. . . .' It is exactly the same with those who say that you can be saved by good works. They make no progress, they receive no answer to their prayers. Jesus Christ has shown us another way. He came down to earth and stretched out His Hand to draw us up out of our sin and shame."

"Once I was on a visit to a friend. He showed me a piece of iron which had the wonderful faculty of drawing metal to itself. It was a magnet, and he moved it about the table, upon which were objects of gold, silver, and iron. When the magnet came near the iron it drew it to itself, but it had no power to attract the gold or the silver, which was so much more precious. This incident reminded me of those words of Jesus: 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners.' He who feels that he is righteous and that his faith is sufficient for him, and that he needs no Saviour, will be left alone. Jesus Christ cannot draw him to Himself."

That salvation which man receives as a free gift without any effort of his own through the mercy of God is the forgiveness of sins. But forgiveness of sins alone (or merely the glossing over of certain misdeeds) cannot achieve complete, permanent, abounding salvation. It is not enough to cut down the various shoots from the tree of sin; the roots must be pulled up and all the ground round the tree must be dug up and renewed. Salvation and redemption are something far more inclusive than forgiveness of sins; they imply the radical destruction of evil, the renewal of the whole being, a totally new birth, and holiness.

"Many people say that salvation is forgiveness of sins, and of course it is partly that. But complete, perfect salvation is freedom from sin, and not merely forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ came not only to forgive sin, but to make us free from sin. We receive from Christ a new vital power which releases us from sin. . . . To be saved by Christ is to receive new life from Him, to become a new creature."

"In a certain garden I once saw a thorn-bush which yielded good

fruit, and I asked the gardener who was attending to it how this could be. He replied that he had grafted a good branch into the bush; this had grown and the thorns had gradually disappeared, and now the good branches had borne good fruit. This incident helps me to understand the work of salvation which Jesus does in us. As the good branch which is grafted into the trunk of the thorn-bush brings new life to the whole bush, transforming it into a good and fruitful tree, so Christ imparts new life to us; He both causes His blood to flow through our hearts, and also makes us into new creatures, capable of bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. And indeed, as the thorns disappear, the fruit will inevitably increase as the new life is formed within us. To be born again means receiving the living power of Christ into one's soul, as the thorn absorbs the sap from the new branch and becomes a new tree. We do not simply receive His word, His teaching, but also His 'blood'—that is to say, the power that flows from His sacrificial Death; through this power we are grafted into Him, and we become a new creation."

Thus we see that, in his thought of redemption, Sundar Singh lays the chief emphasis upon sanctification—that new life which springs from the most close and intimate union with Christ. His conception of salvation, therefore, is coloured by Catholic rather than by Evangelical ideas; indeed, it agrees almost word for word with the definition of the Council of Trent:

"Justificatio non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiae et donorum, unde homo ex iniusto fit iustus et ex inimico amicus, ut sit 'heres secundum spem vitae eternae.'" (Sess. 6. c. 7.)

The thought of some Reformers of the *iustitia forensis*, of the mere being pronounced free from guilt, of Justification, which takes place outside of a man (*iustitia extra nos*), is entirely absent from the Sâdhu's conception. To him the grace of Justification (*gratia iustificans*) is identical with sanctifying grace (*gratia sanctificans*), and in line with Scholastic Theology this grace is an infused grace (*gratia infusa*), which works a qualitative change within the soul.

While Sundar Singh's conception of Justification is

rather opposed to that of some Reformers, he speaks of the relationship between faith and good works in exactly the same way as Luther. Only when man has entered into communion with Christ through faith, and has thus found peace and joy and salvation, is he capable of bringing forth works of love and righteousness. It is only after a sinful heart has become good through God's miracle of redemption that anyone can really do good works. So long as the heart is not cleansed and renewed, all supposed "good works" are useless and futile. Like Luther, the Sâdhu loves to use the parable of the good and the bad tree, in order to show that true faith inevitably "worketh by love."

"A bad tree can bring forth no good fruit, because its nature is bad. The bad tree can only produce good fruit when it has been ingrafted into a good tree; then its natural disposition is changed and improved by the inflow of sap from the good tree. Even so the sinner cannot do anything good, because his inward disposition is not good. He can only do this when his disposition has been altered, and this can only take place when he has been grafted into Christ by faith. When, by a living faith, he is ingrafted into Christ, then he is a new creature who can and ought to lead a new life."

Renewal of the heart through the redeeming grace of God is the foundation of all ethical activity. In this fact the Sâdhu sees the decisive difference between Christian and natural ethics; indeed, between the Christian faith and all other non-Christian religions.

Christ speaks: "The moral teachers of the world say: 'Do good and you will be good.' But I say: 'First of all become good yourself. Good works come of themselves when the heart has been renewed, and is good.'"

"Then are not all religions alike in this, that they preach goodness? Certainly, and yet there is a great difference. The non-Christian religions say: 'Do as many good deeds as you can, and you will end in being good yourself.' But Christianity teaches the very opposite: 'Become good yourself, then you will be able to do good; for goodness grows naturally out of a good heart.' The heart must first of all be changed."

Sundar Singh's words sound like quotations from Luther. Although he has never read the writings of the German Reformer, and indeed has only heard of him quite indirectly, in Protestant missionary institutions in India, yet on this point his views are almost identical with those of Luther.

"The Scripture teaches that no man can do good until he is good himself; good works do not make him good, but the works become good because he does them. He, however, becomes good slowly by the cleansing of the New Birth. That is what Christ means in Matt. vii. 18: 'An evil tree cannot bear good fruit, and a good tree cannot bear evil fruit.' The tree will bear fruit according to its nature." "As naturally as the tree bears fruit, so naturally do good works follow after faith, and just as there is no need to command the tree to bear fruit, so the believer needs no command nor exhortation to rouse him to do good; he does it of his own accord freely and without any forcing." "Christ does not talk about doing and leaving undone, but about being and becoming; not about doing good works, but about being renewed, first of all. . . ."

Once a man has been inwardly transformed by the grace of God he becomes truly creative, and all his external activity is marvellously fruitful. But humanity is not only called to become a new creation, it is destined for something higher still: to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, who is the "express image" of God. "The real purpose of the Incarnation of Divine Love is to raise humanity to its perfection." Thus the Sâdhu's doctrine of salvation rises to the heights of the mystical idea of deification—a "deification," however, which avoids the dangerous reefs of pantheism. The Athanasian idea that God became man in order to deify humanity is re-echoed by Sundar Singh.

In his teaching, too, we find links with that of Origen and Augustine, who suggest that the Christian does not only "believe in Christ," but that he himself becomes "a Christ"; closely related to this idea, also, is the Lutheran formula: "to believe in Christ involves

putting on Christ—becoming one with Him." Here, again, Sundar Singh illustrates his ideas by some suggestive parables.

"In the East there are certain insects whose colour and form closely resemble the trees in which they live. Or, what comes to the same thing: there are some trees which exercise such an influence over the insects which live in them, that the latter become like them; i.e. they look exactly like different parts of a tree, such as the bark, the leaf-stalk, or the leaf itself. The tree is the world in which the insect lives, and its influence is so strong that, to some extent, the little creature becomes almost exactly like it. So we become gradually like Christ, as we live in Him and with Him, through the power of His life which works in us. In faith and life, in thought and mind, in temper and behaviour, we must gradually grow like Him."

"The polar bear lives among the snow, and he is the same colour as the snow. The skin of the Bengal royal tiger looks like the reeds and grasses of the primeval forest. So those who live in spiritual communion with God like the saints and angels have a share in Christ's nature, and become transformed into His likeness."

"In certain countries climate affects the outward appearance of the inhabitants. If, then, the physical atmosphere has such a marked influence upon the outward aspect of human beings, the spiritual atmosphere must affect the soul and its character still more strongly. If we live continually with the Lord in prayer, more and more His image will be formed within us." "Then we shall be transformed into the Divine likeness, and into a glory that is eternal."

"If Christ lives in us, our whole life will become Christlike. Salt which has been dissolved in water may disappear, but it does not cease to exist. We know it is there when we taste the water. Even so the indwelling Christ, although He is unseen, will become visible to others through the love which He shares with us."

The Sâdhu's teaching is full of the mystical idea expressed in the word "deiform"; but the very figures of speech which he employs show quite clearly that he rejects all suggestions of merging the personality in God, or of actual identification with God. The insects are not the tree, although they are so like it in colour; the polar bear remains a bear although he is the colour of the snow. So the man who is like God

is still a human being, even if his face is like the Face of Christ and his life and his works reveal something of the Divine glory and love. The Divine Likeness which he bears about with him springs from his life of humble personal fellowship with God through faith and prayer. The Sâdhu's teaching on deification remains strictly within the limits of evangelical piety.

6. Miracles

Sundar Singh moves in a world of miracle. His public addresses contain stories of the supernatural from his own life as well as from the lives of other saints. To him these miracles are unimpeachable signs of God's power, love and grace, and he feels that they ought to strengthen the faith of others. For instance, once he was sitting in the depths of the jungle, on the banks of a swift river ; he had lost his way and did not know what to do ; suddenly an unknown man appeared and swam across with him on his back ; the next moment his helper had vanished. Another time he was spending a night in the open, shivering and hungry, when, behold, two strange men brought him food, and just as he was going to thank them they disappeared. Again, armed men fell upon him with sticks ; he began to pray, and when he opened his eyes he was alone. The next morning his assailants returned ; and they questioned him about the " men in shining garments " who were with him ; then he knew that the angels of God were round about him. One night he was sleeping in a ruined house ; when he woke up, to his horror he saw that a great snake was lying under his arm ; he fled in terror, then he returned and shook the poisonous reptile from his blanket. Another time he was asleep in a cave ; when he woke up he saw a great leopard standing close to him.

Never, according to his own account, has a wild beast ever done him any harm.

Once, when in Tibet, all through one cold night he was bound by chains to a tree in a forest ; there he stood, starving and shivering, and when morning broke and he became fully conscious he found fruit lying by his side and his fetters fallen to the ground. On another occasion he sat for three days in a well full of corpses, and lo, an unknown man drew him out, touched his injured arm, healed it, and then vanished. The key of the cover of the well was found hanging to the girdle of the cruel judge. Once he passed by a man who pretended to be dead while his deceitful friend begged the Sâdhu to give him money for his friend's burial. But when the lying beggar returned to his companion he found him actually dead ; he hurried back to the Sâdhu, begged his forgiveness, and became converted to Christ. (21)

The wonderful experiences of others also serve the Sâdhu as proofs of God's power and providence. For instance, a Tibetan Christian was thrown over a precipice and was picked up alive. An unknown man came to him and gave him water to drink out of his own hand. And the Christian martyr saw the wounds in the Stranger's Hands and knew it was his Saviour, and he fell at His Feet crying : " My Lord and my God." Once a Christian leper whose finger was withered met a stranger who poured water over his hands. And suddenly the leper recognised his Saviour, and cried aloud : " My Lord and my God ! I want to worship Thee." But He had already vanished out of his sight. To a Tibetan hermit, a seeker after truth, who was about to commit suicide in sheer despair, there appeared a wonderful Being, clothed in light, whose Hands and Feet were scarred, and It spoke to him, saying : " If with all your

heart ye truly seek Me, ye shall ever surely find Me" ; and the hermit's soul was filled with a wonderful peace, though he did not know the Stranger's name. Later, the hermit learnt from Sundar Singh that the Unknown Stranger was Christ. Another Tibetan hermit, who was restlessly searching for truth, was led by a stranger for a hundred miles to a Christian man, by whom he was converted and baptised. And when the stranger suddenly disappeared, the teacher and the convert both realised that he had been an angel from heaven.

To prove the wonderful power of faith the Sâdhu draws many illustrations from the heroic sufferings of Christian martyrs. He tells of a girl of Nepal who out of love to Jesus had refused a suitor ; a red-hot sheet of iron was laid upon her body ; she bore this torture in perfect peace. Her father noticed her radiant face, and he asked her whence she had this joy ; she answered : "From Jesus." But before he could set her free from the instrument of torture she had gone into the land of everlasting joy. Once there was a Tibetan evangelist who was flogged by some opponents ; then his tormentors rubbed salt into his bleeding wounds. But his face shone with peace and joy, and it was like that of an angel. And the people began to think : "This joy is not of this world ; all this that he says about following Christ and having Christ in his heart must be true."

Another Tibetan confessor had glowing nails thrust into his body, but he cried out : "I rejoice to suffer for my Redeemer." And when the lama said, "It is an evil spirit which has taken hold of him," the people replied : "That cannot be ; an evil spirit cannot give such joy to anyone ; it must be a good and a holy spirit."

A preacher of the Gospel was hung up by his feet to a tree, and he said to his tormentors : "You cannot understand how happy I feel because I am thus honoured

to suffer. This world is all upside down, and your whole life is the wrong way up, and that is why you have hung me up like this. But in reality my head is not hanging down ; my spirit is in heaven." After three hours of this torture he was set free, and he lived. Kartar Singh, the courageous herald of the Gospel in Tibet, was once sewn into a damp yak skin and left in the sun for three days. He was joyful, however, all the time, and he cried out to his persecutors : " I thank God for this great privilege of suffering for Him ; men have left me alone, but not my Saviour ; He is with me—indeed, He is in me." Another story he tells is of forty Armenian Christians who were standing naked on a cold winter night by a Turkish camp-fire. One after another, as each confessed his faith in Christ, they were driven into icy water and drowned. And above the head of each martyr Christ appeared with a crown. But the fortieth crown disappeared—the fortieth Christian denied Christ and went back to the fire. When the Turkish officer saw this, he confessed that he loved Christ, and he suffered the same death ; the crown shone above his head also, but the apostate went raving mad.

Every Western reader, if he is at all critically inclined, will shake his head over these tales of miracle and smile gently at the " sentimental love of the marvellous " shown by this Indian believer. Even Sundar Singh says : " We find it difficult to believe in miracles ; this is only human nature." Modern theologians in the West have been repelled by the Sâdhu's " love of miracle," and some of them have attacked him on this point. Their criticism of Sundar Singh is the natural reaction of modern critical rationalism against the atmosphere of miracle in which this Indian Christian disciple lives. This kind of criticism is not entirely valueless ; it is true that the Sâdhu's stories of the miraculous are neither " so spiritual

nor so beautiful" as those in the *Fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi. At first sight they make an impression of peculiar clumsiness and stiffness. The critical historian, however, draws special attention to the curious sameness of the miracle *motif*. There are really only two types of miracle which appear in slightly varied form again and again in the different stories. In the larger number of incidents supernatural figures appear and disappear with startling suddenness. The martyr-stories, too, which the Sâdhu tells, are almost all of the same type; in the midst of terrible suffering the martyrs are filled with supernatural joy which convinces the spectators of the truth of their Faith.

It is very curious to note the different doublets which appear in the Sâdhu's miracle-stories. The finding of the only possible key in the judge's girdle occurs in two different narratives: in one instance the fetters which chained him to the tree were fastened with this mysterious key; in the other, the key belonged to the iron cover of the well and to the iron door of the enclosure round the well. In two situations, widely separated from each other both in place and time—in North India, on the night after Sundar Singh had been driven out of his father's house, when he took refuge under a tree, and in Tibet, when he was bound to a tree during a cold night—each time the tempter brought before his eyes the comfortable home of his father, and each time, as he began to pray, Christ filled his heart with wonderful peace.

We cannot, however, help noticing one curious fact: the converts and martyrs of whom Sundar Singh speaks reveal exactly the same kind of experience as the Sâdhu; they think, feel, and talk just as he does. A Christian evangelist in Baluchistan, who suffered a martyr's death for Christ, once burnt a Bible, in the same way as Sundar

Singh did in his youth. The conversion of the Tibetan hermit is a complete parallel with the Sâdhu's own conversion : there is the same resolve to commit suicide, the same kind of prayer, the same supernatural light—all these elements in the story of his own conversion reappear here. In the same way the conversion of the Mahârishi of Kailâš is only the reflex of the story of the Sâdhu's conversion. The very same Bible words (" Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden . . . God so loved the world . . . ") led this holy man of the Himalayas to Christ, just as they led the Sâdhu. A terrible robber who had turned to Christ narrated the story of his conversion in the very same words which we hear constantly from the Sâdhu's own lips : " I experienced the greatest miracle in my own heart, and it is this : Sinner as I am, I am yet allowed to receive heaven upon this earth."

A Tibetan man of God, who was stoned by a crowd on account of his Christian faith, told the Sâdhu about this experience in words which sound exactly like the Sâdhu's own way of telling a story : " In this terrible situation," he said, " I was filled with this wonderful peace ; this seemed to me the greatest miracle in the world." Kartar Singh, who was sewn up in the yak skin for three days and three nights (just as the Sâdhu sat for three days and three nights in the well full of corpses), expresses his happiness to his persecutors in exactly the same language as the Sâdhu : " In this torture I feel as if I were in heaven."

When a Buddhist ascetic in Tibet, who had been converted to Christ, was being stoned, the stones seemed to him like lovely flowers—just like Sundar Singh in similar circumstances. And as one of the onlookers cried out " He is a fool ! " one of the other spectators declared : " If foolishness can give anyone such peace

I would choose to be a fool." Daud Khan in Baluchistan said the same thing when he saw a Christian preacher's arm hacked off. The Sâdhu tells exactly the same stories about his own life. When an onlooker in Ilom, who was watching his torture, cried out "He is a fool!" a man who had just torn up a Gospel-portion which the Sâdhu had given him said: "If a fool possesses such peace, I also would be a fool!"

Finally, various parallels from the New Testament, and from the legendary literature of Christianity and of Buddhism, show that many of the leading ideas in the Sâdhu's miracle-stories are in no way either new or original. Sundar Singh's story of the stones which seemed to him and to a Tibetan martyr "like beautiful flowers," although "they were quite ordinary stones; but His presence so changed them that I felt as though I were in heaven"—reminds us of the Buddhist legend of Lalita Vistara, in which the missiles hurled by Mâra only swept over Gautama's head and "by the might of his sublime love were changed into garlands of flowers." Sundar's wonderful release from the iron fetters in the forest is like the deliverance of Peter, from whose hands (according to the story in the Acts of the Apostles) the chains fell of their own accord. If the Sâdhu, like the Mahârishi of Kailâš, has never suffered any harm from the attacks of wild beasts, he is like the early Christian Fathers of the Desert, who lived fearlessly among wild beasts, and like Buddha and his disciples, who tamed the wildest animals by their all-embracing love. The words of a Bodhisattva might also easily apply to a Christian Sâdhu:

"Wandering among the mountains I attracted lions and tigers by the power of my friendship. Surrounded by lions and tigers, by panthers, bears and buffaloes, by antelopes, deer and wild boar, thus I lived in the forest. No creature is afraid of me, and I fear none in return."

The story of the deceitful man who pretended to be dead and then really died is a variation of a legend of the Eastern Church which was first told by Theodoret about St. James of Nisibis, certainly with the addition that the Saint's extraordinary power in prayer caused both the death and the resurrection of the man in question. The same story is also attributed to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus and to St. Epiphanias, but without the raising from the dead. Sundar's story of the martyrdom of Kartar Singh is remarkably like the martyrdom of St. Chrysanthus, who, according to the account in the Roman breviary, was sewn into the skin of an ox and then placed in the burning sun. The story of the forty Armenian martyrs which Sundar Singh heard from an Armenian, and which he supposed to be an incident from the most recent persecution of Christians in Turkey, is, in reality, an old Christian legend of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, who are said to have died in that Armenian town about the year 320. This legend has a place in the Roman breviary (Feast of the Forty Martyrs : March 10th), and it has merely been transferred, slightly altered, from the fourth century to the present day.

In addition to these historical parallels, in all these tales of the miraculous the whole mentality of the Indian, and especially of the Indian ascetic, must be taken into account. One of the most able students of the history of Indian literature says decidedly : "Indians have never made any distinction between Saga, legend, and history." This applies particularly to ascetics, who for days at a time are quite alone among the magnificent mountains of the Himalayas, and who give themselves up exclusively to the contemplation of Nature, to inward concentration, and supernatural ecstasy. In their experience the inner vision becomes developed to such

an extent that the usual difference between subjective and objective truth disappears entirely.

All this suggests that some of the Sâdhu's stories of the miraculous need not be considered as historical facts, but as legends ; doubtless they have some solid foundation, but, in the form in which they are told, they have been worked up by a creative miracle-fantasy. Even scholars who admit the possibility of the miraculous cannot refuse to consider such a suggestion. Historical criticism is, of course, independent of the religious and philosophical aspect of the question of miracle. Those who are familiar with the problems of biblical and hagiographical miracle find, to their astonishment, in the anecdotes which the Sâdhu tells over and over again, certain clear principles, which show how legends are formed : repetition of the same *motif*, doublets, and variants. It is a striking and significant fact that we can thus confirm these principles of the growth of legends in people belonging to our own day, for the Sâdhu's stories deal exclusively with experiences of his own and of his contemporaries. So we see that legends do not necessarily arise after the death of a saint, and within the inner circle of his disciples, but during his own lifetime, and perhaps even in his own mind.

On the other hand, we must not forget that miracle-legends are never entirely the products of a purely creative fantasy, but that they are founded on wonderful events which have actually happened. If miracles were impossible, in the broadest sense of the word, and if miracles had never actually happened, religious men would never have invented them. For the historical critic there is, however, this difficulty—that in certain instances—whether in the miracles of the Bible, or in the lives of the saints, or in the same stories in the present day—it is hardly ever possible to establish the actual

fact ; in the end it always has to be left with a *non liquet.* This is exactly what has happened in the case of Sundar Singh. Inquiries have been made into his tales of the marvellous ; in the greater number of instances nothing has been proved, either for or against their historicity. In any case we must guard against reading too much of the legendary element into the Sâdhu's spiritual life. Some of his stories, which Western listeners received with the greatest scepticism, have been confirmed in the most conclusive manner by eyewitnesses, after careful inquiry.

Many wonderful cures which were reported to have taken place have been confirmed by reliable witnesses. The most striking of these incidents is vouched for by a Singhalese merchant, K. R. Wilson, in Colombo. There was a boy in hospital who was so ill that the doctors prophesied a very long and slow recovery, if, indeed, recovery were possible, which they doubted. The Sâdhu prayed for him and laid his hands on him, and in two days he left the hospital perfectly restored, and shortly after that he was able to attend one of the meetings where the Sâdhu was speaking. Another striking cure is narrated by a Presbyterian missionary near Shillong.[1] After one of the Sâdhu's addresses a deaf man pushed his way through the crowd and managed to touch Sundar's sleeve. Instantly he was healed. Striking incidents like these warn us against judging too hastily that a large part of the Sâdhu's narrative is purely legendary.

While the external material factor in most of the reported miracles will always remain an open question, it is not difficult to understand the mental outlook of a man who believes in miracles, and who narrates these happenings in implicit faith. A person who believes in miracles does not live in this visible world of appearances, but in that invisible realm which is beyond the

[1] Mr. J. Salom, of Mawkhar.

world of sense ; as the Sâdhu says over and over again, he lives in heaven while he is still upon earth. Therefore he looks at this external world with quite other eyes than the man who is immersed entirely in the world of external happenings, and who is blind to the secrets of the supernatural world. Where the eye of the " profane " man sees the outward aspect only, the spiritual man, whose vision has been intensified by prayerful intercourse with God, sees the wonderful effects of eternal powers. The world of sense becomes transparent, and the reality of the other invisible, spiritual world shines through. Living contact with the higher world through faith and prayer causes the spiritual man to adopt an entirely different attitude towards external events from that of rationalistic scientific research or of ordinary materialism. Sundar Singh speaks thus of the rationalism and materialism of the present day :

" The days of miracle are not over, but the days of faith are past." " People of to-day do not believe in miracles, and they do not understand them. They spend their time in study or in business, but they give no time to prayer to their Saviour. We shall only experience wonderful things when we spend more time in prayer."

In these words the Sâdhu has touched the heart of the problem. For the man of prayer the external world has a different aspect from that which it has for the intellectual man, or for the man who gives all his attention to business or pleasure. He sees farther than the man who depends wholly on reason ; farther, too, than the rigid order of natural law.

" Miracles are not in opposition to natural law. There are higher laws in Nature of which we usually know nothing. Miracles are related to these higher laws. Through prayer we gradually learn to understand them."

Christ speaks : " Prayer makes things possible to men who would otherwise consider them impossible. Scientific men do not realise that

He who has given an ordered form to all created things cannot be imprisoned within the limits of His own laws. The ways of the great Lawgiver are unsearchable; for His eternal Will and Purpose is the blessing and happiness of all His creatures. The reason of the natural man cannot grasp this, for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned."

"In very cold regions a bridge of water is a usual sight. For as the surface of the water is frozen hard, the river flows beneath it freely and people can walk comfortably and safely over the bridge of ice. But if you were to tell people who live in the heat of a tropical climate that you know of a bridge made of water which spans a flowing river they would say that such things are quite impossible, and entirely against all the laws of nature. The same great difference exists between those who have been born again, who maintain their spiritual life through prayer, and those who lead a worldly life, who value material things only, and understand absolutely nothing of the spiritual life."

Belief in miracles is rooted in the depths of the soul, in its fellowship with God in prayer; it springs from this source, and ever returns to it again. Since, then, the decisive element in this matter lies in inward fellowship with God and not in any definite external fact, in the last resort miracle becomes something very great and spiritual. In contrast with those wonderful inward experiences which come to the believer in prayer: peace, joy, "heaven upon earth," all external miracles, even the most inexplicable leadings and deliverances, must be relegated to a lower sphere. With remarkable energy the Sâdhu never tires of declaring that the miraculous is not to be sought in external signs and wonders, but in the redemption of the soul. "Miracles are not given in order to satisfy our curiosity, but to save our souls."

Speaking of his deliverance from the well, he says: "Perhaps it was an angel from heaven, or perhaps it was Jesus Himself who drew me out of the well. In any case it was a great miracle. The greatest miracle of all, however, was that Jesus filled my heart with His peace in the midst of this dreadful suffering." Of his release from the tree to which he was bound in the forest he says: "The most wonderful part of the whole experience was not the fact that I was set free, but that I was allowed to feel this wonderful peace in the midst of those terrible sufferings. . . . Everyone cannot go to Tibet and be bound

to a tree, but everyone can experience the peace and joy which I found in Christ."

"I have often met people who wanted me to talk about miraculous happenings. They had heard so much about this sort of thing, and they wanted me to tell them some stories. But the greatest miracle of all is the fact that Jesus Christ has changed my whole nature and that He has saved me from my sins." "That a sinner who was dead in trespasses and sins is born again in Christ, is the greatest miracle in the world." "The greatest, I would like to say the only, miracle which can happen to us is the peace of Christ. That a poor, restless, impure, sinful human soul can receive the forgiveness of God and taste the peace of Christ—this transcends all human reason, this is the miracle of miracles. If a man has once experienced this miracle, he does not marvel any longer over other so-called miracles." "The greatest miracle of all is the New Birth; if anyone has experienced that in his own life, all other miracles seem possible." "He who believes in this miracle believes in all miracles."

The same Sâdhu who tells of so many strange and wonderful happenings in his addresses also leads his hearers again and again away from external marvels into the world of inward experience and prayer, where the highest miracles take place. "If you really wish to see signs and wonders, then give time to prayer." Indeed, sometimes he expressly warns his hearers against the desire to see signs and wonders, and exhorts them rather to great simplicity and usefulness in everyday life. "We ought not to want to see signs and wonders, but to do the Will of God." Because Sundar Singh lays all the stress upon the spiritual miracle which God works in the heart of the believer, he resists all attempts to make him lay his hands upon the sick and pray over them. When a Singhalese woman asked him to lay his hands upon her son who was dangerously ill, he replied: "In these hands there is no power, only in the pierced Hands of Christ." At last, however, he acceded to her urgent request, and a few days later the boy appeared, perfectly well, and sat among the Sâdhu's hearers. But when people acclaimed the Sâdhu as a wonder-

worker, he explained that it was not his power, but the power of Christ, which had worked the cure. Finding, however, that they would not believe him, he told himself that he must not do such things again, as they encouraged superstition and diverted attention from the Gospel of Christ which he had to preach. Since then he has refused to lay his hands upon sick folk, or to allow troubled souls to touch his robe ; neither will he bless individuals nor whole audiences. "How can these hands which have torn up the Word of God, and thrown it into the fire, bless anyone ?"

These statements throw quite another light upon the Sâdhu's belief in miracles than that which his own accounts would lead us to expect. A critic has called him "an imitator of a mediæval miracle-worker who scatters signs and marvels wherever he goes" ; nothing could be farther from the truth. His attitude towards miracles is more spiritual than that of many Christian saints, whether ancient or modern. Because his soul lives entirely in the spiritual sphere, everything which he sees and experiences in the visible world is full of "signs and wonders." Hence, to him, so-called "miracles" in the external world are quite natural ; and he speaks of them in a perfectly natural way ; at the same time he does not consider them important in comparison with the wonderful work of God's grace in redemption. Therefore, in the Sâdhu's opinion, it does not really matter whether his tales of the marvellous are accounts of actual events or merely the reflection of his own childlike piety.

In the peculiar emphasis which Sundar Singh lays upon the spiritual miracle of redemption, once again he reminds us of the German Reformer, who had such a deep distrust of all signs and wonders because he felt so strongly that the greatest wonder of all was the soul's

joy in the absolute certainty of the forgiveness of sins. The " visible " wonderful works which Jesus did were " only signs for the uncomprehending, unbelieving multitude," to whom one " throws apples and pears as to children " and whom one must lead to faith " through external marvels." " We, on the contrary, should praise God and rejoice in the great and glorious works which Christ does daily among His people, giving them power to overcome the might and force of the devil." The " mighty work " which is greater than all " bodily miracles and signs," " which shall endure until the Day of Doom," the " wonder of wonders," is a strong, living faith.

Thus Sundar Singh leads us right into the heart of this question ; he helps us to find the middle path between superstitious love of the marvellous and rationalistic scepticism. Sundar Singh's life and activity illuminate and confirm those exquisite thoughts about miracles which Dostoevsky puts into the mouth of Zosima in the *Brothers Karamazov* :

" In my opinion miracles are never any difficulty to a man who is in touch with reality. A person who is gifted with this sense of reality is not moved to believe by seeing miracles. Indeed, if he is an unbeliever, he will always be able to cast suspicions on any miraculous happening. And even if the miracle be presented to him as an irrefutable fact, he will rather doubt the evidence of his own senses than yield to the fact. If he does accept it, it will only be as something quite natural which was there all along, only he did not happen to know it. Thus in a soul endowed with this sense of reality, faith is not born from miracle, but rather miracle from faith. When, however, a man of this kind really believes, his very temperament leads him to accept the miraculous unconditionally."

7. The Future Life

Sundar Singh belongs to the small number of those who believe that even during their earthly life they have

been allowed to penetrate the unseen world—that world which other men regard with dim perception and with yearning desire. In the experience of ecstasy he has found the solution of that great enigma which causes so many men such anxious uncertainty : the fate of those who have passed over the river of death into the unknown land of eternity. But in public he speaks very seldom of these ecstatic experiences ; usually he does not talk about " heaven " in the sense of the future life at all, but simply of " heaven upon earth," of peace in Christ. For only those whose heaven has begun upon earth will be able to dwell eternally with Christ, and with His angels and saints.

Following the ancient conception of the Vedas, Sundar Singh distinguishes three heavens. The first heaven—" heaven upon earth "—is the Presence of Christ, with all the peace and happiness which the believing soul finds in prayer. The second heaven is Paradise, that Paradise which the dying Saviour promised upon the cross to the penitent thief. The majority of men enter this state after their death with their " spiritual body " and have to stay there for a certain period—some for a few days, others for several months and even for years ; during this time they are trained by angels, until they are fit for the Vision of Christ. But this purgatory is no place of painful cleansing, like the " purgatory " so often seen by Western saints in their visions. Here there are no spiritual flames cleansing the souls of men from the impurities of sin ; no, those who dwell there rejoice in the Presence of Christ, although they are not allowed to see Him with their spiritual eyes, but they feel His blissful Presence in ever-flowing waves of light, and from afar they catch strains of heavenly music.

In this intermediate state the souls of the departed

ripen in holy desire and become able to contemplate the Face of Christ and to enjoy the fellowship of elect souls and of the Saints. Those who had attained to close fellowship with God while they were on earth, like Francis of Assisi and Thomas à Kempis, are able, at death, to enter immediately into the third and highest heaven. Further, even now, in moments of special grace, such souls (like the Seer of Patmos and the Sâdhu himself) are able to visit this state of blessedness "in the spirit," and to have happy intercourse with Christ and His angels and saints. Sundar Singh gives a wonderful description of his heavenly visions, which will bear comparison with the visions of the Apocalypse, of the Christian saints, and of the great Florentine poet-seer. To some extent, perhaps, his rich symbolism has been affected by the conception of heaven current among the saints of Islâm, who in their turn depend upon the intuitions of Christian saints, particularly those which are found in Ephraim's book on Heaven (*De paradiso Eden*).

In the centre of heaven is the throne of Christ, the Saviour. His countenance is "as the sun shineth in his strength," yet it does not dazzle the beholder. An indescribable gentleness and kindness beams in His eyes, a sweet smile is on His lips. His hair sparkles like gold and shines like the light. His wounds, from which flows His Precious Blood, radiate a glorious beauty. Round about the Throne, "ten thousand times ten thousand," stand celestial beings : angels and saints. Their raiment is glorious and dazzling, radiant with a beauty unknown upon earth. In all their faces there is a "family likeness," for as on earth the sun's rays are reflected in the water, so is the Face of Christ reflected in the spirits of just men made perfect. Between Christ and these glorified spirits mysterious waves of

light flow back and forth, spreading a wonderful peace and a deep refreshment like a soft rain which refreshes the trees in the midst of summer heat—these are the life-giving waves of the Holy Spirit. These happy souls behold " the lovely Face of Christ " in all around them, and their faces shine with wonder and delight.

Then there are wonderful streams and mountains, flowers and trees, so wonderful that, in comparison with them, all the streams and mountains, flowers and trees of this world seem shadowy and dim. Everything is transparent, so that the spiritual eye can penetrate infinite distances. Glorious music resounds in the heavenly spaces, apparently proceeding from some hidden celestial choir. All the heavenly spirits, even the rivers and the mountains, the flowers and the trees, join in a spontaneous outburst of praise and adoration.

In a spiritual language which is understood by all, the souls of the blessed hold converse with Christ and with one another, entering into the deepest mysteries and problems of the soul. No fatigue is there, no pain, no sorrow, nothing but joy and bliss, love and delight, unto all eternity ; " Joy for eternity, neither pain nor conflict. There have I seen joy filling all things to the furthest limits, perfection of joy ! "—this inspired utterance of Kabîr, which Sundar Singh may have heard in his early youth, re-echoes in his description of heaven. There, too, is no fainting and failing, no stagnation, but instead, continual progress, infinite development, unceasing movement towards Divine Perfection.

" Within humanity are the germs of countless qualities, which cannot ripen in this world for lack of the right kind of environment. But in the future life they will find the right environment, which will enable them to reach perfection." " There, in the Presence and Fellowship of our Heavenly Father . . . infinite means will be provided for infinite progress, until we become perfect as He is perfect."

Yet in spite of this continual progress towards perfection, at every stage the heavenly life is utterly satisfying. The blessed spirits feel at home in their Father's House, and experience a joyful sense of well-being : " Here," they say, " is our Eternal Home." But the joy of human beings who have striven and suffered here upon earth will surpass the joy of the angels who have always lived in the Father's House, and have known " no suffering and no conflict." The sorrowful will find their sorrow turned into joy, and those to whom life has brought bitterness will taste and know that " God alone is sweet." So this heavenly life is infinite and eternal blessedness, of which the beginning and the end is Christ. But even here, in the heights of heaven, God, the infinite Father, is still invisible ; for ever He remains the " hidden God." Unseen, yet present, He reigns in the hearts of those who worship Him ; even to the perfected spirits He shows Himself only in the Face of His Son, who is the express Image of His Glory and His Love.

So long as man is in this earthly life he cannot grasp the wonder of that celestial bliss which is his immortal destiny. He is like the chicken in its little shell, destined for a great and glorious world of which it can form no conception beforehand.

" If the little chicken in the egg were to declare that nothing existed outside the egg, and its mother were to reply : ' No, in the outside world there are mountains, flowers, and blue sky,' and the little chicken were to reply : ' You are talking nonsense, I can't see any of these things,' and if the shell were to break suddenly, then the little chicken would see that his mother was right. It is just the same with us ; we are still in the shell, and we see neither heaven nor hell. But one day the shell will break, and then we shall see. At the same time there are hints of the future state : the little chicken in the shell has eyes and wings, which are in themselves a sufficient proof that they will be needed for a future life. The eye is created for seeing, yet what can it see while it is in the shell ? The wings are created for flying, but how can it fly while it is in the shell ? It is quite clear that neither eyes nor wings are intended

for a cramped life within the limits of a shell. In the same way, we have many desires and longings which can never be satisfied here. There must be some way of satisfying them, however, and this opportunity is Eternity. But just as the little chicken needs to be kept warm as long as it is in the shell, so while we live in this world we have to be cherished and warmed by the brooding Presence and Fire of the Holy Spirit."

Sundar Singh's teaching about hell is not consistent. In his earlier addresses he used to speak constantly about the certainty of an irrevocable doom.

"In this world God gives us daily the opportunity of salvation. But if we reject this opportunity here, no second chance will be offered to us hereafter. If there had been a possibility of salvation in the other world, Christ would not have come down to us." "When we are in hell we shall have no opportunity of becoming better. . . . Once evil has the upper hand, it is useless to expect any improvement in behaviour." "Satan falls upon us in the darkness, and drags us down into death, into eternal death, from which there is no escape."

Even in his latest pamphlet he speaks more than once of everlasting punishment. These dogmatic statements are not in harmony with the views which Sundar Singh expressed in his conversations with Canon Streeter. (22) There he spoke as though God's Love were operative even in hell. Hell is not presented as a place of eternal pain and torture, but as a painful purgatory in which the sinner, even if infinitely slowly, becomes changed, and is at last ready to see Christ and to join the company of the saints in heaven. The anguish which souls feel in that place of torment drives them upwards by its own energy towards heaven; they try to escape thither, but "they find heaven even more uncongenial than hell, so they return thither." But God, who is Love, enlightens them more and more even in hell. By His grace, and with the help of the saints in heaven, who carry on a redemptive work amongst them, the love of God gradually springs up in their hearts, and enables them finally to enter that heaven for which God created

them. Even though this time of suffering should endure for millions of generations, at last they will "enter heaven like the Prodigal Son when he arose and came to his father."

"When, at last, they have reached the goal, then they will rejoice and be filled with thankfulness to God, though perhaps they will still be less happy than those who have accepted Christ on earth. Thus hell also is a training-school, a place of preparation for the eternal Home."

In his opinion a very small number of souls (as, for instance, the devil himself, concerning whose fate the Sâdhu was given no answer) will be shut out of heaven for ever.

In one of his latest writings, *Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life*, Sundar Singh expresses, though with some reserve, the thought of the ἀποκατάστασις ἁπάντων. In a special chapter he deals with the question: "Will all men at last return to God?" His answer and the reasons upon which it is based are given in the following sentences:

"If the Divine spark in the soul cannot be destroyed, then we need despair of no sinner." "Since God has created men to have fellowship with Himself, they cannot for ever be separated from Him."

"After long wandering, and by devious paths, sinful man will at last return to Him in whose Image he was created; for this is his final destiny."

In the book in which Sundar Singh speaks of his visions, he leaves the problem of everlasting punishment an open question. Yet the answers which he received from the heavenly beings leave very little doubt of his faith in the final salvation of all men. Obviously, this belief is opposed to the traditional teaching of the Western Church, as well as to the general tendency of Christian mystical experience. The doctrine of everlasting punishment is not only part of the dogmatic theology of the Roman Catholic Church, down to the

present day it is a dogma which Catholic theologians defend with great energy ; to a large extent it is an accepted article of the Faith in popular Christianity, and an undisputed axiom with most Christian seers. Many Christian mystics indeed, as well as the Sâdhu, have expressed the beautiful thought that the Love of God is at work even in hell. Thus St. Catherine of Genoa says : " God's loving-kindness and mercy shine even in hell, for God could have condemned the souls who are there, with absolute justice, to a far heavier punishment than that which they now endure." Catholic theologians, like the second founder of St. Sulpice, Abbé Emery,[1] have tried to introduce the idea of a " lessening of the pain of the damned." Sometimes, indeed, the old idea of the ἀποκατάστασις ἁπάντων reappears in mystical theology. Thus the great English mystic, Julian of Norwich, says that if the teaching and meaning of Christ be true, then—in ways that God alone knows—" all will be well." But the idea that hell is a kind of purgatory (even though it may last for endless ages), which will finally disappear, is hinted at in ancient times only by Clement of Alexandria, and clearly expressed by Origen and his follower Gregory of Nyssa (and then indeed only as " esoteric " teaching). At the time of the Reformation the idea of the ἀποκατάστασις was attacked by Denk and the Anabaptists. Since the rise of rationalism it has been partially accepted by Protestant theology, probably because the doctrine of everlasting punishment was gradually losing its significance. It is worthy of note that the Sâdhu, unaffected as he is by rationalistic influence, nevertheless does not seem to believe in the traditional doctrine of everlasting punishment. He may have absorbed something of the teaching of Mahâyâna-Buddhism, in which it is

[1] Died 1811.

suggested that the punishment of hell only endures for a definite span of time ; or he may have been influenced by the Korân, which, in a reflection on the state of the damned, contains this sentence : " God can do all that which He wills to do." On this point, indeed, Sundar Singh finds himself in closer agreement with primitive Christianity than with the contemporary doctrine of the Western Church.

To the Sâdhu's mind, heaven and hell are great eschatological realities ; this is not, however, the whole truth. Both states begin, not at the hour of death, but in this life. Like Jakob Böhme, Sundar Singh maintains that heaven and hell are already present in the hearts of men.

" Heaven and hell are two opposing spiritual states which have their origin in the hearts of men. The foundation for them is laid in this life."

But these states of mind are not purely interior ; they are mysteriously and secretly connected with the unseen world.

" Sometimes, without any tangible cause, one feels a sense of joy or pain which is a ' touch ' from the spiritual world ; that is, from heaven or hell. These ' touches ' are continually casting their shadows upon the hearts of men. Gradually this contact with one sphere or the other of the spiritual world becomes permanent. According to our good or our bad deeds and habits, we come under the influence of one or the other, and this tendency decides our destiny. So, even in this world, the foundations of heaven and hell are being laid. When, therefore, the soul leaves the body at death it enters that state for which it was prepared here on earth."

The Sâdhu's heart is already in heaven ; but whereas other religious souls have a foretaste of heaven only in the experience of inward peace, to him it has been given to enter, even in this life, the " highest heaven," and there to have fellowship with Christ and with His elect. Deep as is the joy which he tastes in working and

suffering for Christ, still deeper is his longing for the day when he may live eternally in that land to which he is now caught up in rare moments of ecstasy.

"This is the state where my heart is satisfied; here I am completely at rest. No sorrow, no pain, nothing but love, streams of love, perfect bliss, and this to all eternity—not merely for a thousand years." "When I am there I am utterly satisfied; in that state there is nothing left to wish for. It is marvellous. It is our home."

8. The Bible

The Sâdhu's spiritual life is based wholly upon personal contact with the Living Christ. This inward peace which flows from the Presence of Christ is independent of all external guarantees of salvation; it depends neither on sacramental symbols nor on a sacred book. "It is not because I read the Gospel that I know Christ, but because He revealed Himself to me." Even if the Bible were lost, Sundar Singh assures us that his fellowship with the eternal Christ would not be in the least impaired. (23) His spiritual experience has saved him from idolising the Bible as his earlier co-religionists idolised the Granth. Again and again the Sâdhu points out that in order to enter into personal touch with Christ it is never sufficient merely to read the Bible; prayer, not Bible-reading, is the true key to heaven. To him it is a fact of special significance that in contrast with other religious founders, even with the Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles, Christ never wrote a single line Himself.

"Other teachers who know that they will have to leave this world are anxious that their teaching should continue to live in written form when oral instruction is no longer possible. But Christ is quite different. He never dreamt of leaving us alone, and He will be with us to the end of the world; therefore He did not need to leave any written word behind. Then there is another reason why He wrote nothing. If He

had written something in a book, men would have bowed down and worshipped it, instead of worshipping the Lord Himself. God's Word is only a hand stretched out to point the way to the Lord who is the Truth and the Life." "The Life and the Spirit of the Lord can only be written in the hearts of men, and not in books."

Owing to his strongly mystical temperament, the Sâdhu does not lay the same stress upon the value of the Bible as Luther, who breaks out continually into almost defiant exultation over the "Word" (although Luther, at least in his younger days, never separates the Word from the Spirit). To the written word of God which is contained in the Old and the New Testaments, that "Word of God" must be added which the devout soul hears in its hours of quiet intercourse with the Saviour. When Sundar Singh was once asked by a German Missionary Secretary whether he would give the preference to personal revelation if it came to a choice between that and the written word, Sundar Singh answered very simply: "The same Lord who inspired the Scriptures is He at whose feet I sit"—a thought which reminds us once more of the *Imitatio Christi*: "*Ego, incuit Dominus, docui prophetas ab initio et usque nunc non cesso omnibus loqui.*"

In spite of the fact that the Sâdhu prizes personal fellowship with Christ in prayer above everything else, the Bible is his daily bread of life. "Thanks to the mercy of God," he says, "I have found that it is the word of the Saviour which has vital power." The New Testament is his constant companion, the only possession which he carries about with him, excepting, of course, his saffron robe and his blanket. From this book he draws material for private meditation; and he finds it a continually renewed inspiration both in his prayer-life and in his work of public speaking. 'In this book there is everything one needs to know about the Saviour

of the world." Indeed, the New Testament is the guide which has led him in the right way to Christ. In a lecture before the British and Foreign Bible Society he expressed to this Society his deepest thanks because it had given him the Gospel in his mother-tongue. To him, as to so many other Indian seekers, the Bible has been a guide to Christ.

"God reveals Himself ever more and more through His Holy Word to all who seek Him with their whole heart." "The heralds of the Gospel cannot go everywhere, but God's Word can find an entrance everywhere . . . and it changes men, so that they begin to love the Saviour, the World-Redeemer."

In his addresses he tells of wonderful conversions which have been caused by reading the New Testament, of persons who through the reading of God's Word "found the Saviour." "Thanks to the Word of God, thousands have had the same experience as I have had, and have become united with their Lord and Saviour." The most remarkable of these conversions is the following :

"Once," says Sundar Singh, "I was wandering through Central India. At one place I was speaking to a heathen audience about my Saviour, and I closed my address with the question : 'Will you not read the book for yourselves which tells us about Jesus Christ ?' Now among my hearers there was an active opponent of the Christian religion. He bought a copy of the Gospel of John, read two or three sentences, and then tore it into bits. The colporteur who had sold him the book was sad and discouraged, but I comforted him and reassured him thus : 'Do not lose heart . . . one day something very different will happen.' . . . Two years later I learnt the following : As the man who had torn up the Gospel of John got into the train he threw away the bits ; at that moment another man was walking across the platform who for seven years had been earnestly seeking the Truth. He noticed the bits of paper lying on the ground, picked up one of the pieces and read these words—'eternal life.' Indian religion teaches the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, but what is 'eternal life' ? On another piece he found the words 'Bread of Life.' What could that mean ? He showed the torn pieces to a passer-by, and added regretfully that it

was a pity that the book from which they came had been torn up. The latter replied: 'These words come from a Christian book; don't read that stuff; you will only be defiled.' However, this warning did not deter the man from going away at once and buying a New Testament. He read it with the deepest eagerness, and became a convinced disciple of Jesus Christ. He found his Saviour, and in Him peace and joy. Later on he became a messenger of the Gospel in Central India. So one of the torn pages became to another soul the veritable Bread of Life."

Sundar Singh is deeply convinced of the "wonderful power of the Bible." His childlike faith in the influence of Bible-reading is shown by the fact that he takes with him on his missionary journeys for distribution whole copies of the New Testament as well as Gospel portions. When he finds hermits among the Himalayas who live in perpetual silence, shut up in their caves, he hands in through the tiny opening some pages of the New Testament, in the hope that they will convey to the dwellers within something of the Light of Christ. And yet the Sâdhu is free from that external conception of the reading of the Bible which is current in some Protestant circles, and has no sympathy with the orthodox theory of verbal inspiration. For him the Bible is, throughout, a mystically inspired creation. "Those who wrote the Bible did not receive their inspiration by making notes, but because they lived with the Word of Life." The Scriptures are "inspired" in the primitive sense of the word, "given by the Divine Spirit": the authors wrote the sacred books "in the Spirit"—that is to say, in the state of inspiration, in ecstasy. In the opinion of Sundar Singh ecstatic experience alone can illuminate the mystery of the inspiration of the Scriptures. It is characteristic of all ecstatic experience that it is impossible to express this infinite Divine content in finite form, to express in human words the ἄρρητον. Human speech is incapable of unveiling the mystery of Divine love which the ecstatic has experienced; all

speech that attempts to utter something of the unfathomable Divine wonder is like the uncertain lisping speech of a child. Sundar Singh thinks that this is the reason the Scriptures conceal such deep Divine thoughts under such an imperfect, meagre, human form.

"The Holy Spirit is the true author of the Holy Scriptures; I do not mean by that that every Hebrew or Greek word is of Divine inspiration. Just as my clothes are not *me*, so the words of the Scriptures are only human words. The language of everyday life cannot really express spiritual things in an exhaustive manner. Hence it is difficult for us to penetrate through the words to the spiritual truth. To those, however, who are in touch with the author—that is, with the Holy Spirit—all is clear. Christ Himself says: 'Just as I clothed Myself in human form in order to redeem the human race, so My Word, which is spirit and life, is written in human language'; that is, it unites divinely inspired and human elements."

Thus the divine word of the Bible contains divine truth, which has been spiritually perceived, in the imperfect form of human language. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." "Humble and mean are the swaddling clothes, but exceeding precious is the treasure which they conceal, even our Lord Christ Himself."[1] Just because the exterior covering is so imperfect, and the precious content something so different, it is useless to cling to the exterior. Those who desire to understand the meaning of God's Word must pierce through the outer covering till they find the hidden divine meaning. Only those who "live in the Spirit," like the holy men who wrote the book, are able to grasp the meaning of the words of the Bible. *Similia similibus cognoscuntur.* Only when a man is in a similar spiritual state to that of the inspired writers (although this similarity may be very different in degree) can he really penetrate the mysterious meaning of the Scriptures. Because, therefore, spiritual things cannot be perceived

[1] Luther.

without meditation and prayer, meditation and prayer alone form the real key to the understanding of Holy Scripture.

Christ speaks: "If you do not understand Me, you cannot understand the Word of God. In order to understand it rightly you do not need to know any Greek or Hebrew, but you must be in the communion of the Holy Spirit, of that Holy Spirit through whom the apostles and prophets wrote. The language of the Word of God is spiritual; only he who is born of the Spirit can rightly and completely understand it, whether he is a scholar or a child."

This conception of the thoroughly mystical inspiration of the Bible explains why the Sâdhu has such a marked preference for the "spiritual Gospel," the Gospel of John. It is the Gospel which he reads most often, and which he quotes most frequently. After the Gospel of John he draws most inspiration from the Epistles of St. Paul and from the book of Revelation; he also quotes a good deal from the Synoptic Gospels, both words and stories of Jesus. Sometimes he uses the very words of prophets and psalmists to express his own experiences. The tales, too, of the Old Testament historical books are dear to him, and full of teaching; particularly as an ecstatic and a visionary he has an immediate understanding of the childlike and realistic intercourse with God which marks the religious men of the Old Testament.

Like all great Christian believers and men of God, the Sâdhu explains and expounds the Bible according to his own personal experience of the power of the Gospel; in the wonderful peace which Christ has given him, he finds the clue to the Scriptures. In this he reminds us of Luther, whose joyful faith in God's gift of salvation is the "centre and foundation of the whole of Holy Scripture, according to which all the other parts of the book must be understood and explained."

To the Sâdhu, as to Luther, the Bible is a "book of comfort and of grace," "since all Scripture witnesses of Christ." But because the central thought of the Scriptures—Salvation, Peace, and blessedness in Christ—is emphasised in varying degrees in the different books of the Bible, it is therefore necessary "to make a distinction between them, and to choose which are the best." [1] As Origen and Augustine, Luther and Calvin loved the fourth Gospel, so the Sâdhu also regards it as "the true core and centre of all the books," "the one tender, true, chief Gospel, far to be preferred above the other three Gospels." The Gospel of John is indeed, in the opinion of Sundar Singh, the most valuable part of the Bible for all Indians, even for non-Christians, because in its phrase, "You in Me, and I in You," they catch echoes of a pantheistic *motif* of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgîtâ. But the Sâdhu's love of the fourth Gospel is not in the slightest degree coloured by pantheism; rather, like all great Christian saints, he loves it so much because he realises that the fourth evangelist beheld the mystery of the Godhead of Christ with the "eagle eye of the Spirit." When asked why he felt so strongly drawn to the Gospel of John, he replied:

"John lay on the Master's breast. He had a warm heart, and he did not converse simply in words, but rather heart to heart with Jesus. Therefore he understood Him better." "St. John seems to me to have loved Christ more than the other apostles. The others asked questions and were satisfied when they received an answer from Jesus, but he rested on Jesus' breast. I think he desired something that united heart with heart." That is why John, more than the others, "had a greater power of expressing the inward and personal relationship of our hearts with Christ."

As John rested on the Master's bosom during the Last Supper, so, says Sundar Singh, must every Christian

[1] Luther.

rest on the Master's bosom when he reads the Scriptures. Only in the deep places of inward prayer does the meaning of the Word of God become clear ; " He who does not understand Me does not understand My Word," says Christ to the Sâdhu. Only he who practises intimate fellowship with Christ, and who reads the Scriptures " at His Feet," knows by experience that " the flesh profiteth nothing," but that it is the " Spirit which maketh alive," and, like Peter at Capernaum, he says to Christ : " Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."

9. The Church and the Churches

Sundar Singh's real home in this world is the experience of ecstasy, in which he sees Christ face to face. Yet for him this experience is not, as it is to so many Christian and non-Christian mystics, a *φυγὴ μόνου προς μόνον*—a " flight of the alone to the Alone." In ecstasy he does not only enter into fellowship with Christ, but with the host of blessed spirits which surround Christ's throne. For him ecstasy is not only *communio Christi* but *communio sanctorum.* " Here (in the third heaven)," he says, " is the true communion of saints, of which we speak in the Apostles' Creed." Sundar Singh is no mere Christian individualist, feeling no need for fellowship with other souls, like Sebastian Franck and Sören Kierkegaard ; all his thoughts and feelings are governed by the idea of Christian fellowship. But the Church to which his heart belongs is no visible institution upon earth, but the whole body of those who belong to Christ.

" I belong to the Body of Christ, that is, to the true Church, which is no material building, but the whole corporate body of true Christians, both those who are living here on earth and those who have gone on into ' the world of light.' "

This is why from beginning to end the Sâdhu regards the Church of Christ as the triumphant assembly of the saints in heaven, hidden from our earthly vision, yet truly existent, the *caelestis urbs Jerusalem*, the οὐράνος ἐκκλησία. This thought of the Church in heaven is not new ; centuries ago it filled the hearts of Clement of Alexandria and of Augustine with holy joy. It resounds through the whole rich liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. " In that Mystery of Christ are present choirs of angels invisibly attending, the lowest is united with the highest, earth is joined with heaven, visible and invisible become one." But it is just these words of Gregory the Great in the Liturgy of the Church which reveal the difference between the classic idea of the Church as it exists in Western thought and the Sâdhu's conception of the Church. The Sâdhu does not in the least understand the great thought that the Church on earth, however imperfect she may be, is yet a reflection, a foreshadowing, and even a preparation for the Church in heaven. Sundar Singh is quite unable to grasp the wonderful idea that beneath the veil of liturgical symbolism a mysterious union is even now possible with the heavenly assembly and Church of the firstborn, and this not only to specially favoured souls through the medium of ecstatic experience, but to all Christians without exception.

Since the Sâdhu's chief attention is concentrated upon the Church in heaven, and since he sees in the Church on earth merely a number of individual Christians, he has never been able to see the full significance of the institutional element in the Church, neither from the theological, ecclesiastical, nor sacramental point of view. Clearly he does not disregard the necessity for membership in " the organised Church on earth " ; he himself, in his own opinion, is technically a member of the

Anglican Church in India. We never hear him saying anything depreciatory about the organisation of the Christian Churches. Indeed, he accepts the existing Church order, and shows it by the way in which he refuses to baptise his own converts, whom he always sends on to the nearest mission station. Only very rarely, whether in Tibet or in the Himalayas, does he himself baptise anyone, and then only because he knows of no Christian missionary in the whole district. He considers himself called solely to the proclamation of the Gospel and to witness for Christ, but he does not think that he has any vocation to administer the Sacraments. Again and again he expresses his respect for those who bear office in the Church. He only resigned his preacher's licence with the express permission of his Metropolitan, with whom he remained on terms of close friendship. When, during his stay in England, he took leave of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he knelt before him, according to the English custom, to receive his blessing. And when he wrote his book about his visions he particularly asked his diocesan bishop for a foreword.

But in spite of the outward respect which he yields to Church authorities, so far as he himself is concerned he recognises no teaching authority, nor any kind of Church discipline. Like the great founder of the Quakers, George Fox, he knows no other authority than that of the "Inner Light." The immediate inward revelation vouchsafed to him in prayer and ecstasy is for him the only religious ground of certainty in matters of faith, in comparison with which both ecclesiastical dogma and theological speculation occupy a secondary position.

"There are not enough men within the Church who have a sufficiently deep spiritual experience to invest with final authority the ecclesiastical dogmas as they are now taught. Therefore I go straight to God Him-

self. . . ." A revelation which I have received in ecstasy is worth more to me than all traditional Church teaching. Ecclesiasticism and Christianity are not the same thing. John Wesley and General Booth followed the guidance of God in opposition to the Church, and events proved that they were right."

Of the Papal claims Sundar Singh says :

"So far as the Popes are concerned I have a great respect for them as individuals"; "but I do not believe in the Pope as the Vicar of Christ and the successor of St. Peter. I find in him neither the inspiration and spirit of Christ nor of St. Peter. Christ Himself is always within His own, and St. Peter did not leave behind or appoint any successor, but he taught that every true Christian represents Christ on earth." "The rock upon which Christ built His Church is not Peter, but Christ Himself."

Although the Sâdhu is quite independent of outward Church authority in all his religious life, thought, and work, he recognises that this external authority has high pedagogical value for the majority of mankind. "As all are not mystics, the authority of ecclesiastical tradition remains necessary for most men." Thus Sundar Singh makes a distinction between two kinds of Christianity : a Church Christianity for the majority of men and a free Christianity of mystical souls who find their way to God along solitary paths. He makes his thought clear in a beautiful parable.

"In the mountains the rushing streams make their own river bed along which they flow ; but in the plains men have to work hard to make canals, in order that the water may flow along them. It is just the same with those who live upon the heights with God. The Holy Spirit streams through them freely, while those who give little time to prayer and communion with God have to find their way with much labour and effort."

Since the Sâdhu recognises no ecclesiastical authority in his own life, but lives in unfettered communion with his Redeemer, his religious life does not really need the

help either of sacramental means of grace or of the fellowship of public worship. It is true that after his wonderful conversion he desired to be baptised in order to fulfil the will of Christ. Also in obedience to Christ's command he receives the Sacrament, as often as he has opportunity, and that too in all Christian Churches, with the exception of the Roman Catholic ; indeed, he extols the blessing and power which flow from this Sacrament. But he does not give to the Eucharist that high place in the Christian life which it occupied in the early Church. Neither is he convinced of the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, according to Catholic or Lutheran doctrine ; he conceives it rather in a figurative and symbolical way—obviously under the influence of the Calvinistic view of the Sacrament which he would meet among Presbyterians and Evangelical members of the Church of England.

" I do not believe that bread and wine really become the Body and Blood of Christ. But their effect upon the believer is as great as if it were so." " In bread and wine there is nothing special. The Eucharist as a means of grace depends upon our own faith."

Sundar Singh does not attach much importance to public worship because in his experience the heart prays better in solitude than in a congregation. Not even the silent worship of the Quakers seems to him to satisfy the needs of the prayer-life. Neither does he see any special support for the sense of the certainty of the Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic worship practised in the Roman Catholic Church, and now also to a large extent in the Anglican Church—in this he is in sharp contrast with the Catholic Sannyâsi Brahmabandhav, who was an enthusiastic Sacramentalist and who used to spend hours before the Tabernacle in prayer. On the other hand, the Sâdhu does not condemn the Adoration

of the Blessed Sacrament ; indeed, he justifies the Eucharistic cult in these words :

" I have no objection even to idolatry if it serves as a means of bringing men to Christ, and if it makes mental concentration and prayer easier."

Sundar Singh's ideal of prayer is not that of the liturgy in church, nor of public worship in the meeting of believers, but rather the quiet prayer of the inner room or in the lonely solitudes of the hills.

" It is quite natural that no form of church service can ever satisfy deeply spiritual people, because such persons already have direct fellowship with God in meditation, and they are always conscious of His blessed Presence in their souls." " If you cannot find Christ in the great congregation, go into your quiet room, and there you will find Him. In solitude God can speak to us more easily than when we are among others. In the stillness of solitude, when the gaze of the heart is fixed upon Christ, we gain that peace for which we long."

In this passage Sundar Singh generalises from his own experience, and overlooks the fact that for many people the only " quiet room " they know is the House of God, and that for many, even for a Luther, the experience of public worship is exactly the stimulus they need for the practice of private prayer. Further, there are many others, even among the greatest Catholic mystics, who find that the sight of the Host and of the Tabernacle as a quasi-sensible symbol of the Presence of Christ awakens the holiest and purest experience of prayer. The great primitive thought of the Church of Christ uniting in the liturgy in order to praise the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, " as though with one mouth," and together " to call upon Him with one accord," is foreign to the Sâdhu's mind. Canon Streeter has remarked with truth that Sundar Singh comes from " the classical land of hermits." Neither Brahmanism

nor ancient Buddhism knew any cult of public worship ; and in Hinduism it occupies a very subordinate position : the ordinary people are usually satisfied with doing *pûjâ* (the private worship in the temple before the presence of the representation of the god); the ascetic, on the contrary, gives himself up to *sandhyâ*, worship in silence and solitude.

This hermit-temper comes out still more clearly in the Sâdhu's apostolic activity. Sundar Singh evangelises entirely alone, not only without any ecclesiastical *missio canonica*, but without any connection with a missionary society : " I do not belong to any special society ; in this respect I am quite alone." While other great Indian religious men who had just as strong a tendency to solitude, Jina and Buddha, founded a *saṅgha*, a Religious Order, with which an Order of Tertiaries, or a Lay Brotherhood, was connected ; while Guru Nânak, the founder of Sundar Singh's previous religion, created a religious community ; while St. Francis of Assisi, whom he honours so highly, called into existence a great *fraternitas*, the Sâdhu has never felt any desire to gather around him a fellowship of like-minded people, who could help him in his difficult mission work. " St. Francis felt himself called of God to found an Order, but I do not feel called to do so." In spite of the fact that some four hundred young men have begged him to accept them as his disciples, he has steadily sent them away ; in his preaching of the Gospel, too, he is usually alone, although now and again he may happen to fall in with like-minded people with whom he wanders about and preaches.

This decided individualism merges, however, into the universal spirit, more pronounced in him than in the experience of other outstanding Christian men. In the Sâdhu the saying of Jakob Böhme comes true : " A

Christian has no sect ; he may live in the midst of the sects, and attend their services, but he belongs to no sect." Just because the Sâdhu belongs to no special Christian denomination, because, as he says of himself, he belongs " to all those who belong to Christ," he is able to serve all with his message. " I am free to go everywhere ; for me there are no ecclesiastical barriers." There is no other instance in Christian Church history of a man of his calibre who has preached the Gospel in so many Christian churches and communities : among Nestorians and Jacobites, Syrians and Copts, among Anglicans and Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists, Lutherans and Reformed, Baptists and Quakers. And although the Roman Catholic Church is the only one that has refused him the use of its pulpits, yet countless Latin Christians have sat at his feet to hear him give his witness to Christ.[1] Sundar Singh has brotherly fellowship with all Christian confessions.

" In all the Christian churches where Christ is loved I feel myself among brothers ; wherever I find true Christians, there I can say that although their customs and organisations are strange I feel myself at home with them." " Christianity is neither a society nor a church, it is Christ Himself. Those who live with Christ know that He Himself is the whole of Christianity."

Because Christ is all in all to the Sâdhu, it seems to him that the interior unity of all Christians is an obvious fact. When he was talking with that great champion of Christian unity, Archbishop Söderblom, he said : " In the deep places of the soul, and in prayer, all Christians are one " ; " in Christ we all speak one language, which is sufficient for us all." Since his sense of this

[1] He has never complained of this Church for its attitude towards him ; recognising that its ecclesiastical principles would not permit him to preach within its borders.

interior unity is so strong, he lays no emphasis upon the divisions and differences within Christianity ; he regards them as unimportant. In his opinion the existence of so many different Churches and Confessions reveals a remnant of *caste* spirit in the midst of Christianity ; he compares the Indian caste system with the divisions in the Anglican Church, "High" and "Low" respectively ; as he said frankly to the English Primate, "Christ would not have made such differences amongst you."

"Sects are curious and superfluous things. There is only one God—then why so many Churches? Wherefore such strife? It seems to me that this is the fault of the world. If all sects were to unite into one there would be no more world, there would only be heaven." "I often say to myself when I see Christians who cannot live together in concord during this short earthly life, how will they live together during the whole of eternity?"

Sundar Singh thinks and lives in the great thought of Christian unity. As an English newspaper put it : "He teaches the people of the West the real Catholic spirit with the lips of the East." But as this unity is something purely interior, rooted in Christ, he has no faith in external attempts to federate or fuse the different Churches into one.

"I do not believe that the union of Catholics and Protestants would accomplish a great deal. When you mix two colours you get a third ; so if Catholics and Protestants unite you will have to be prepared to see a host of new sects and varieties arise. I do not believe in unions which are artificially engineered. External unity is futile. Those alone who are united in Christ are really one in Him and will be one in heaven." "True Christians must be united in spirit, however greatly they differ in their way of worshipping God. I am no believer in an external artificial unity ; I believe only in the interior union of hearts and souls."

In Sâdhu Sundar Singh we are confronted with the spectacle of a great Christian believer who is so immersed

in Christ that the Church with all its organisations and regulations is a lesser matter.

"I do not believe in any particular Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, but I believe in the Body of Christ; that is, in the corporate fellowship of true saints and believers." "I do not value the Church as such, but I set great store by Christianity, which to me means Jesus Christ. In answer to the question 'To which Church do you belong?' I always reply: "To none. I belong to Christ. That is enough for me."

These sentences give the clearest idea of his ecclesiastical position. Indeed, in such words we almost catch an echo of the ancient Christian axiom: "*Ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία*" ("Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church"). Nevertheless, there is a slight difference. The classic exponents of the Christian idea of the Church do not conceive of the Church in quite as spiritual a manner as Sâdhu Sundar Singh; they do not separate to the same extent the visible from the invisible Church. For them the Church—and they include in this term the visible, institutional Church—is the "extension of the life of Christ," Christ's "mystical Body," His beloved "Bride," the "Virgin Mother of the Faithful." It is not only the ancient Church Fathers who speak like this, foremost among them Augustine, the herald of the great thought of the Catholic Church, but Luther also sings the praises of the Church as "the Mother who bears and nourishes each Christian soul by the Word of God." Indeed, he even accepts and uses Cyprian's phrase (as also did Calvin), *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. "In this one Church every soul that desires to be saved must find a place, and become part of the body corporate, for apart from her no one will be saved." Sundar Singh speaks continually of the ever-living Christ; the parting words of the Risen Lord: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the

world," are very dear to him, and he quotes them constantly. But he sees this endless life going forward solely in the interior and exterior life of the individual Christian, and not in the wide fellowship of the Church. He is deeply imbued with the sense of the value and reality of the Incarnation of the Son of God ; in wonderful parables he proclaims the great paradox that the King of Glory came and lived on earth in such poor human guise. But he does not see that this Incarnation, this *Kenosis*, is continued in Christ's mystical Body, the Church. In a passage of considerable beauty Clement of Rome speaks of the mystery of the eternal character of Christ's Incarnation. " I believe that ye know indeed that the Living Church is the Body of Christ. . . . The Church, like our Saviour, was spiritual, but in the last days He manifested Himself in order that He might redeem us. Therefore the Church also, which is spiritual, was manifested in Christ's Flesh, thus making it clear that, if any of us cherishes and does not destroy this mystery in the Flesh (ἐν τῇ σαρκί) he will understand it in the Holy Ghost ; for this Flesh typifies (ἀντίτυπος) the Spirit, and no one who destroys the type will be able to see the original picture (αὐθεντικόν). Therefore, brethren, saith the Lord : 'Preserve the flesh, that ye may inherit the Spirit.' But if we say that the Flesh is the Church and the Spirit is Christ, then he who sins against the Flesh sins against the Church, and such an one can have no part in the Spirit, which is Christ." [1]

Sundar Singh's predecessor, Brahmabandhav, saw further into this mystery when he wrote : " There is only one fact which approaches the greatness of the Incarnation, and that is the founding of the Catholic Church in the Upper Room at Jerusalem."

[1] *Ad.* Cor. xiv. 2 ff.

Friedrich von Hügel, the idealistic, broad-minded defender of the Catholic ideal of the Church, has pointed out this lack in Sundar Singh's life and thought in these impressive words :

"The Sâdhu accepts the foundation of the Church quite simply, quite realistically; he accepts the Incarnation, the descent of the Son of God from heaven into space and time, quite purely and simply, yet how great a matter this is! Further, he regards the heroic pole of the Church—the monastic life—quite simply and realistically. He has, indeed, quite an exquisite sense of the way in which Christianity, viewed from one aspect, is essentially heroic and ascetic, though not in any way rigid or severe. He also shows a real recognition and love for the domestic pole of the Church, when he cherishes a tender love for his wonderful Mother, and when he exhorts most of the converts won through his labours to continue her life and her work although in a new spirit. Once more, how great a matter this is! But he finds it impossible to accept quite simply, quite realistically, a concrete historic Church, which would include the foundation of the Church which he already accepts in such a concrete historic way, and contains within itself the power of further revelation. He holds firmly to the fact of the Incarnation without affirming the 'extension of the Incarnation,' which is the view, strongly held and affirmed, of countless saints in the past."

There is another point brought out by Friedrich von Hügel which throws light on the Sâdhu's one-sided position with reference to the Church. Sundar Singh is a pattern of humility, as all who have seen and heard him can witness. But he does not manifest this humility by submitting himself to the doctrine of the whole Church. According to Catholic-thinking (and not merely Roman Catholic) Christians the complete ideal of Christian humility includes this aspect.

In another place Friedrich von Hügel says very beautifully :

"We can trace a certain incompleteness in a man's humility, so long as it consists of humiliation before God alone, and as it claims to derive all its religious help without any mediation of the senses and of society purely spiritually from the Infinite Pure Spirit alone. Complete humility imperatively demands my continuous recognition of my own multiform

need of my fellow-creatures, especially of those wiser and better than myself, and of my lifelong need of training, discipline, incorporation; full humility requires filial obedience towards men and institutions, as well as fraternal give and take, and paternal authority and superintendence."

Not that the Sâdhu in any way lacks this kind of humility. His readiness not only to give, but also to receive, to speak not only of his own experiences, but also to learn from the experiences of others, revealed itself over and over again in his intercourse with Western Christians.

"No one can ever say: 'I know enough, I do not need to learn from others.' We are learning every day, and as I learn every day from those whom I meet in the East, so also I learn from my brethren in the West."

The Sâdhu lacks, however, the sense of being fully incorporated into the great organism of the whole Church, the contact with the age-long tradition of the Christian Church, the acknowledgment of the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est.* That is why he has no understanding of the great symbol of historical and institutional continuity of the Church: the episcopal *successio apostolica*, but he expresses himself about it in quite a Donatist vein:

"I do not believe in the doctrine of Apostolic Succession. . . . The true spiritual succession has been interrupted several times, because not all the consecrated Bishops and Popes were consecrated by the Holy Spirit."

Like Indian Rishis and most Christian individualists, he considers personal experience of salvation the only criterion of religious truth. This is the only way in which we can understand why he affirms his own mystical experiences over against all the teaching and tradition of the Church. Very many of the Christian saints of the ancient days, of the Middle Ages, and of more recent times, had ecstasies and visions like

the Sâdhu, but none of them would have dared to lay greater stress on his own personal revelations than on the ecclesiastical tradition. This comparison is not intended as a reproach to the Sâdhu's piety, which is wonderfully illuminating in its certainty and sureness; it only shows that other great Christian saints had a more inclusive ideal of humility. It is, however, a fact that this radical individualism presents a real danger to the sanity and balance of the spiritual life, which smaller souls than the Sâdhu might easily find too much for them. In his own case, as Söderblom has pointed out, this danger is averted by his familiarity with the New Testament.

Sundar Singh's attitude towards the conception of the Church reveals a slight one-sidedness. This one-sidedness can be explained by the fact that he came out of the individualistic spiritual world of Hinduism, and that at first he only came into contact with the more individualistic forms of Christianity, i.e. the more Protestant forms of Presbyterianism and Low-Church Anglicanism, so that, as Zacharias the Catholic convert puts it: "in him Protestant and Hindu individualism met, and mutually strengthened each other." Certainly Sundar's personality is so rich, so deep, so loving, that it could not be more attractive if it were more ecclesiastically minded, least of all in India. But those who study the saints of the early Church and of the Middle Ages, and see how their deep and rich personal piety was balanced and completed by their Catholic sense of the Church, will see that they represent a fuller ideal than that which has been given to the Sâdhu either to perceive or to carry out. But where could he have found the Church in whose fellowship he could have carried out his high calling to the life of a Sâdhu? This is the great problem which Friedrich von Hügel tries to solve in a

remarkable letter to Canon Streeter. Neither the Anglican nor the Presbyterian nor the Roman Catholic Church could have possibly been to him a spiritual home, at least in the form in which they at present exist and work in India ; in none of them could he have exercised his apostolic vocation in the large and all-embracing way in which he works in India and the neighbouring countries. It is not the fault of the Sâdhu, but of the Christian Churches, that he has been unable to grasp the full meaning of the idea of the Church. There can be no doubt that his ecclesiastical position is God's will for him. The very fact that Sundar Singh—this large-hearted, humble, loving apostle, cannot fully belong to any one of the Christian Churches shows more clearly than anything else the present need of Christendom in all its depth and breadth. Has the true Church ceased to exist ? Since the great schism of the sixteenth century there has been no Universal Church in which apostles and saints like the Sâdhu could find a home. Like him, they have to take refuge in the Church Triumphant. But painful as is the feeling which creeps over men like Friedrich von Hügel when they are brought face to face with the Sâdhu's attitude to the Church, it is comforting and cheering to reflect that this disciple of Christ can speak to the members of all the Churches, and that his message was welcomed by all. His proclamation of the Gospel sounds like a perpetual repetition of the High Priestly prayer, "*Ut omnes unum*," like a significant prophecy of the coming unity of divided Christendom.

10. Christianity and Heathenism

Both in his own spiritual life and in his message, Sundar Singh is strongly Christocentric ; like Paul,

Augustine, and Luther, he finds in Christ his Alpha and his Omega ; he knows no other God save the God who is revealed in Christ. But in spite of the fact that Christ fills his whole heart and his whole life, his outlook is far removed from that narrow and loveless attitude towards non-Christian religions which characterises so much of Christian orthodoxy. "The whole world lies in darkness ; only one ray of light shines upon this sea of darkness, the Figure of the Historic Jesus of Nazareth ; the only point in the whole of world history which has the divine approval is Golgotha"—such and similar sentiments which one can hear—strangely enough—even to-day from the professorial chairs of German universities, would be impossible to the Sâdhu. He could never deny to all non-Christians any possibility of ever entering heaven, as Christian Protestant theologians still do so easily. Just because he is impregnated with the sense of the infinite Love and Mercy of God it is a central article in his creed that God wills the salvation of all men. "God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"—the Sâdhu's heart is full of this New Testament thought. "Redemption is for all races and peoples in the whole world." When at one time he was much exercised about the fate of non-Christians, he received this answer in ecstasy : "If there were no hope for all the non-Christians in the world, then God would cease to create any more human beings." "Very few will be lost, but many will be saved. So is it."

Next to these inward revelations rank the outward experiences which the Sâdhu has had with Indian religions and with Christianity. All that he has experienced in his own life and on his missionary journeys is a vital study in comparative religion. He has had a rare opportunity of comparing Christianity with the

other non-Christian faiths. But this comparison has had results very different from the theoretical comparisons of Western theologians. While the latter often see nothing but light on the side of Christianity, and on the heathen side sheer darkness and night, relieved only by a few faint rays of light, the Sâdhu sees light and darkness on both sides. Deep shadows brood over the life of Western Christendom, while in the lives of Indian "seekers" for the truth there are sparks of Divine light. Sundar Singh speaks with a certain irony of "so-called Christians" and "so-called heathen."

"People call us heathen," he said in conversation with the Archbishop of Upsala. "Just fancy! my mother a heathen! If she were alive now she would certainly be a Christian. But even while she followed her ancestral faith she was so religious that the term 'heathen' makes me smile. She prayed to God, she served God, she loved God, far more warmly and deeply than many Christians. So far as I can see, there are many more people among us in India who lead a spiritual life than in the West, although they do not know or confess Christ. They live truly according to the light which God has given them. . . . Here you have the Sun of Righteousness, but how many among you care about It? People here live only for this world. . . . Among us in India there are many, many, who lead a holy life. Christians have received from God as a Gift a priceless treasure, even Christ; and yet many of them cannot give up their worldly life, but both their hearts and their hands are full of worldly things. Indians forsake the world and deny themselves, although they have not received this treasure from God." "The 'heathen' do not seek for days or months only, they go on seeking earnestly and anxiously for the truth for years at a time"; "during this search they have to suffer many things." "But you Christians get tired in ten minutes." "The nominal Christians in these countries call the people in non-Christian lands 'heathen.' And it is, of course, true that the people who live there do worship idols; but here people worship themselves, and that is still worse. Idol-worshippers seek the truth, but people over here, so far as I can see, seek pleasure and comfort." "The people of the West have sought and found science and philosophy. They understand how to use electricity and how to fly in the air. The men of the East have sought the truth. Of the three Wise Men who went to Palestine to see Jesus not one was from the West."

The life of the Sâdhu has been full of the most surprising experiences. He himself has found in Christianity that which he could not find, though he sought for years, in his ancestral faith : peace, joy, and blessedness. And yet, to his great disappointment, he has been forced to see that for most of its followers Christianity is not that which it is to him ; indeed, that most of those who bear the Christian name are far behind the so-called "heathen" of his native land in spiritual depth and religious earnestness.

"There used to be, and there still are, in India men who live in God without knowing Christ ; that is, they do not know His Name." "To a certain extent God has allowed countless sincere souls in India to find Him." It is this personal experience which, in addition to the thought of the Eternal Christ, has led him to a wonderfully broad and deep conception of non-Christian religions, such as is attained by very few Western theologians. The sphere of revelation of the Divine Logos—the Christ—includes far more than the New Testament story of Redemption, with its Old Testament Prologue. "He is the Light which lighteneth every man coming into the world."

"The Living Christ reveals Himself to every man according to his need." "Non-Christian thinkers also have been illuminated by the Sun of Righteousness. Indians have received the Holy Ghost. . . . Just as every soul that lives breathes in the air, so every soul, whether Christian or non-Christian, breathes in the Holy Spirit, even when he knows it not."

Indeed, Sundar Singh goes still farther ; like the most broad-minded and most daring of Christian thinkers, he sees traces of God's revelation not only in the religious experiences of non-Christian religious men, but also in the non-religious aspects of the intellectual life of humanity, in science and philosophy, in poetry and art.

"Truth has many sides. Each person individually, according to the capacities God has given him, reveals different sides of the truth, and gives them expression. . . . A tree may attract one person on account of its fruit, and another because of its beautiful blossoms. . . . In the same way the philosopher, the scholar, the poet, the painter, and the mystic, each according to his capacity and in his own way, declares and describes the various aspects of Divine Reality which have made an impression upon him. For the individual it is impossible, however, to have a comprehensive conception of Divine Reality, and to make it known in its many-sidedness."

The same Sâdhu who never tires of proclaiming to the whole world the revelation of God in Christ differs from many Christian theologians of the West in this: he does not narrow down the Divine Revelation to the Historical Jesus. Like the far-seeing ancient Christian apologist Justin Martyr, like the great Alexandrian teacher Clement, like the author of the *Summa theologica*, and the modern theologian Schleiermacher, Sundar Singh sees Divine revelation in the whole religious and non-religious spiritual and intellectual realm. The history of religion, as of the intellectual life, is a kind of stairway which leads up to the mystery of the Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen Christ. Everywhere the Eternal God opens up to us His infinite love and grace, but nowhere in the whole world is this mercy so clearly seen as in the life and sufferings of His Son. Everywhere the Logos is at work, illuminating, guiding, helping and healing, sending out His beams in all directions, but in the Incarnate, Risen, and Ever-living Christ these radiant beams are focused into one clear and burning flame.

"We in India," says the Sâdhu, "knew already that God is good. But we did not know that He was so good that Christ was willing to die for us." "There is much that is beautiful in Hinduism, but the highest light comes from Christ." "To some extent God satisfies all desire for Himself, but full satisfaction is only found in Christ"; "he who finds Him finds Heaven upon earth."

Since the light of the Eternal Word to some extent illuminates the non-Christian religions, they also are a preparation, a schoolmaster, to lead to Christ. What the Law was to the Jews and Platonist philosophy to the Greeks, the wisdom of the Vedas and of the Sâstras is to the people of India, a *παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν*. Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâya, the enthusiastic champion of Vedantic philosophy, has said : "The end of the Vedânta is faith in Christ, the Son of God." The Sâdhu tells of a Pandit whom he learnt to know in North India. He used to give lectures upon the Sacred Books of India, and on one occasion he closed with these significant words : "The Vedas reveal to us the necessity for redemption from sin, but where is the Redeemer ? Prajâpati, of whom the Vedas speak, is Christ, who gave His life as a ransom for sinners." When his hearers expressed their astonishment at these words, he said : "I have a greater faith in the Vedas than you have because I believe in Him whom the Vedas reveal, even in Jesus Christ." Sundar Singh expresses the same thought in beautiful pictorial language :

"The Wise Men followed the Star to Bethlehem. But when they reached Bethlehem they no longer needed the Star, for they had found Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. When the sun rises the stars lose their radiance." "In India we have many genuine truth-seekers, who faithfully follow their Star ; but it is only starlight which guides them. But you Christians have the glory of the Sun." "Hinduism and Buddhism have dug canals, but they have no living water to fill them." "In this sense I was prepared to receive the Living Water from Christ." "Christianity is the fulfilment of Hinduism."

In simple language Sundar Singh has expressed the deep truth which the study of Comparative Religion brings out ever more clearly : the universal revelation of God through the history of mankind and His unique revelation in Christ is deeply rooted in the supreme breadth and height, fullness and purity of the Christian

religion. It is that rich and ancient truth which the New Testament states so clearly and convincingly :

"God has never left Himself without a witness." "To the Gentiles also has the Holy Ghost been given." "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." "And of His grace have we all received, and grace for grace."

Part V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUNDAR SINGH

1. His Position in the History of the Christian Religion

THE Sâdhu is an eminently creative religious personality. However closely he may be related to other great spirits in the Christian succession, his religious thought and life are nevertheless entirely original and fundamentally his own. It is quite impossible to say that he belongs to any particular school of Christian thought. It would be quite as mistaken to class him with the mediæval mystics as with the reformers of the sixteenth century; neither can we place him among the ancient martyrs and confessors of primitive Christendom, any more than among the great missionaries of the Western Church in ancient or in modern times. In his inner life he is most closely related to the family of Christian mystics. His love of solitude and contemplation, his steady practice of meditation and reflection, his theocentric method of prayer, his frequent visions and ecstasies, his conceptions of heaven —all these things point in the direction of mysticism. The fact that he unites a strenuous life of work in the service of the brethren with a rich contemplative experience does not lessen his right to be called a mystic; indeed, it is a supreme mark of the Christian mystic to be able to combine the *vita contemplativa* with the *vita activa*, the *vicissitudines sanctae quietis ac necessariae actionis*, as Bernard of Clairvaux so beautifully puts it. But it is a striking fact that a mind like his, which has so much in common with the Christian mystics, should yet be in such close agreement with Martin Luther,

who was the very opposite of a mediæval mystic in his conception of the central doctrines of Christianity, of Christ and salvation, of faith and works. Sundar's self-denying life of poverty and celibacy is entirely in line with the monastic ideal, as that is understood in the Catholic Church ; on the other hand, he has no room in his ideal of service for the third *consilia evangelica*, the counsel of Obedience, involving voluntary submission to a monastic Rule and to a monastic Superior as God's representative.

In his sense of eternal values, in his unceasing surrender to the supernatural world, in his transcendentalism, and in his vital contact with the *communio sanctorum*, Sundar Singh is in harmony with the Catholic conception of Christianity expressed in its dogma, its liturgy, and its ethical system. Yet in his freedom from all ecclesiastical authority, and in his strong emphasis on the authoritative character of inward experience as the only basis of certainty, he is entirely Protestant, and essentially Lutheran. It is no mere coincidence that he speaks with such enthusiasm of Martin Luther, " that wonderful Reformer and man of God." In one sense Sundar Singh might be described as *more* Protestant—that is, more spiritual—than the Reformers in that he lays less emphasis upon the objective authority of the " Word of God." Again, Sundar Singh is deeply Catholic, and poles apart from Protestant orthodoxy in the universality and breadth with which he affirms the elements of truth and revelation in non-Christian religions. On the other hand, he is typically Protestant and almost Pietistic in the stress he lays on the need for conversion to Christ, and in his continual emphasis on his personal religious experience.

Is it, then, right to describe the personality of the Sâdhu as a peculiarly classic example of a synthesis of

ecstatic mysticism with evangelical assurance, of Catholic and Protestant piety? The Sâdhu is, however, far too simple and original to allow us to speak of him in terms like "synthesis," or of the fusion of different types of piety. He comes from the land of religious syncretism, but he does not belong to that sphere at all. His whole nature is so simple, everything has grown up so naturally, and springs spontaneously from within himself. One can only describe his religious personality as a primitive unity. His piety is therefore best characterised as early Christian, because in the early Church those divisions which led to schism later on were still harmonised within the organic life of the whole body of Christians. De Grandmaison, a Jesuit, puts it very aptly when he says that the Sâdhu's piety is "evangelical Christianity which has not developed beyond the Patristic period." The distinguishing mark of this Indian apostle of Christ is a spontaneous and naïve revival of the spirit of early Christianity. It is just because we see that this revival of the early Christian spirit is so unconscious and unplanned that we realise that all attempts to fit the Sâdhu into any of the later forms of Christian ecclesiastical organisation are quite useless.

The element which differentiates Sundar Singh's piety from that of most Christian mystics is the complete absence of any kind of formal teaching on "degrees" in the spiritual life, of any kind of *Scala paradisi*. It is true that the "spiritual ladder" taught by most Christian mystics is something far more vital than that of Indian Yogis and Buddhists. But the fact that the Sâdhu uses no terms of mystical classification, neither Christian nor Indian, shows very plainly that his mind is childlike and simple, never dreaming of analysing the inner religious life. Closely allied to this

simplicity is the absence of all mystical technique of the mind, such as has been elaborated by the Indian Yogis and some more recent Western mystics. It is significant that the *exercitia spiritualia* of Ignatius Loyola have been no help to the Sâdhu in his prayer-life. It is no less striking that the symbol of the Bride, so much loved by many Christian mystics, is practically entirely absent from his thinking, and has no meaning either for his personal life or for his message. It is only when he refers to his voluntary celibacy that he ever says that he is betrothed to Christ. In this respect, too, we notice the decidedly Biblical character of his religious thinking, that peculiarly childlike yet virile spirit which is so striking an element in the personality of Luther. Finally, in contradistinction to the Vedantists and Neo-Platonists, as well as to many Christian mystics (Dionysius the Areopagite, Eckhart, Catherine of Genoa, Angelus Silesius), he rejects quite decidedly those conceptions of union with God which involve the idea of "deification." Although he often speaks of the possibility of the soul becoming like God, he is very firm in his assertion that union with God consists in the personal act of faith. "Through faith we are in God and God is in us. But God remains God, and we remain His creatures."

It is in his naïve and childlike spirit that the Sâdhu differs from so many Christian mystics; and yet in this respect he does not go so far as Luther. This point comes out most clearly in Sundar's spiritual conception of prayer, which is in strong contrast with Luther's broad and rather concrete ideas. Whereas the Sâdhu only regards *one* type of prayer as truly Christian—that is, the prayer for God Himself—Luther considers that the essence of Christian prayer consists in childlike petition for material and spiritual gifts, in

a spirit of confident assurance based on the Divine Promises. Surprising as the agreement between Sundar Singh and Martin Luther may be in other directions, here there is no less great a gulf than that between the great reformer and the mediæval mystics. This contrast of religious temperament reveals itself in another respect. Luther, like other Reformers, is above all a fighter, a man who feels that he has to defend the rights of the Gospel against an apostate Church, just as the Old Testament Prophets had to fight for a pure monotheistic faith against a flourishing and popular polytheistic religion. This accounts for their one-sidedness and exclusiveness, their intolerance and harshness. Sundar Singh, on the contrary, is the very embodiment of the peace of Christ ; nothing is so foreign to his spirit as strife, protest, and controversy. He is a preacher of the Gospel, a witness to Christ, without any spirit of aggressiveness. He is a shining incarnation of an evangelical Christianity, which differs from that of the Reformed Churches in that it is not exclusive but inclusive in spirit. It is no less significant that this evangelical Christianity of the Sâdhu includes those primitive Christian ideals of the monastic life which the Reformers so hotly rejected on account of their supposed tendency to foster a legal and self-righteous spirit : the ideals of poverty and celibacy. Sundar Singh, indeed, avoids speaking of a life devoted to poverty and celibacy as though it were a higher form of life, but it cannot be denied that he considers the full following of Jesus in this respect as the highest ideal of Christian perfection ; Sundar Singh has a special admiration for the missionary monks of the Roman Catholic Church in India. Protestant influence can certainly be traced in the way in which he regards the *consilia evangelica* entirely in the light of the

question of vocation. Only when a man has received a special Divine call, and when he obeys this call without any depreciation of the way followed by his brethren, are poverty and celibacy truly evangelical ideals.

In his mystical conception of prayer, in his freedom from the spirit of controversy, and in his idea of what is involved in following Christ completely, the Sâdhu's religious ideal is clearly different from that of the Reformers. On the other hand, it is very striking that his evangelical Christianity is far more strongly subjective than that of Luther. To Sundar Singh, witness for Christ means, in the first place, speaking publicly of his wonderful personal experiences, and especially of his conversion to Christ. This species of confession has something overwhelming about it, because it springs from a sense of inner necessity, and is in no way meant to obtrude his own personality, but rather to glorify God's power and mercy. At the same time it reveals a certain one-sidedness, since the strong emphasis on personal experience tends to throw the objective and universal aspect of the revelation of Divine truth into the background. It is evident that even the message of Paul and of the first apostles, which was based also on personal experiences of the Risen and Exalted Lord, had a far more objective outlook than that of the Sâdhu ; the same may be said of Luther, who, in spite of all his passionate subjectivity in writing and in preaching, keeps the personal element more in the background than does Sundar Singh. In this respect the Sâdhu has a decided affinity with Christianity of the Pietist and Methodist type, in which a sudden and decisive conversion to Christ, and personal witness to Christ on the part of the convert, hold a central place. No one will blame the Sâdhu for this peculiarity, but it

cannot be denied that it denotes a certain one-sidedness and limitation which, if it were too highly prized by others, might easily become a danger in the religious life. Above all, we see how greatly the Sâdhu's subjective message needs to be completed by a strongly objective theology, embodied in the teaching of the Church. The more strongly a Christian thinker lives in the clear atmosphere of objective religious truth, the more conscious will he be of the one-sidedness of the Sâdhu's piety and teaching.

On closer acquaintance, Sundar Singh's personality might be described as primitive and evangelical, with, however, a tendency towards Pietistic subjectivity and a non-ecclesiastical individualism. He represents a simple, childlike, and yet clear and spiritual religious faith, based entirely upon the New Testament. In spite of his close connection with the ascetic and mystical type of religion associated with the Roman Catholic Church, and in spite of the breadth of his mind, in which respect he goes far beyond the frontiers of Protestantism, his whole temper is not characteristically Catholic, but Protestant. The typical Catholic mental attitude, the striving to harmonise revealed Truth with the whole of the intellectual and spiritual life of humanity, is not apparent in him. Theological acumen, liturgical beauty, the spirit of Church fellowship, and the art of ecclesiastical organisation do not enter into his scheme of things ; he does not quite grasp their full significance for the Christian religion. With the same strict concentration and inflexible exclusiveness which is characteristic of all strongly evangelical souls, he proclaims continually the " one thing needful." But it is just at this point that the Sâdhu and kindred souls are truly great.

2. The Significance of Sundar Singh for India

For centuries India has been a land of religion. To a greater extent than in any other country there is in India a tremendously strong sense of the reality of the transcendental world, together with an earnest resolve to sacrifice everything to the supernatural order. Ought not this land, therefore, to be the best soil for the glad news of Christ? Ought not the hearts of this people to open willingly to the Gospel? And yet there are few countries in the world in which Christian Missions have met with such stubborn opposition as in India. As early as the second century after Christ Christian messengers began to work there. In those early days the messengers were Syrian missionaries; the sixteenth century witnessed the beginning of Roman Catholic missionary activity. Since the eighteenth century missionaries from all kinds of Western Churches have been at work. In spite of the fact that Christian Missions have left a distinct impress upon the mental life of India, as we can see in some of the outstanding Indian men of the present day, the number of Indians who actually confess Christ is a mere drop in the ocean compared with those who remain true to the ancient religious traditions of India. What are four and a half million Christians compared with two hundred and seventeen million Hindus, twelve million Buddhists, and sixty-nine million Mohammedans? In comparison with the patient, persevering, and sacrificial effort of the Christian missionaries, this result seems unsatisfactory. The cause of this want of success lies partly in the fact of the extreme antiquity, richness, and depth of the Indian religions, but still more in the incapacity of Christian missionaries to adapt their

message sufficiently to the Indian mind. An eminent Jesuit missionary, P. J. Hoffmann, goes so far as to say: "The whole of modern mission work in India has gone to pieces on the rocks of a rigid Europeanism, and for that reason it is a great fiasco." Canon Western, who belonged to the Brotherhood of the Imitation founded by Stokes, says very aptly:

"Christianity in India is too little Indian. It is cut off from the life and thought of the country, and dominated by Western personalities and Western methods. But these things are essentially impermanent." "The Christianity which has been taught in India until now has been the English and American type of nineteenth-century Protestantism, a severe and logical faith, with a tendency to become rather matter-of-fact . . . with very little sense of the supernatural, or any trace of mysticism or asceticism. A Christianity of that kind could show the young Indian Church the weaknesses of the Sâdhu ideal, but it could not grasp its noble elements. . . . The teaching of the Roman Church has obviously been favourable to the Sâdhu ideal, but only along traditional Western lines. Separation from Indian life, and dependence upon the foreign mission, which is characteristic of non-Roman Christians, became a yet stronger characteristic of the Roman Church in India through its centralised uniformity in every detail of doctrine and discipline."

This European attitude of mind on the part of all the Churches which are trying to evangelise India is in direct opposition to the missionary methods of early Christianity. The Gospel of Christ could only conquer the Hellenistic world of thought by clothing itself in a Hellenistic garment; in the same way Christianity will only win the spiritual world of India when it puts on the garments of India. In ancient Christendom great thinkers, like the two Alexandrians and the three Cappadocians, were able to clothe the Gospel of the Incarnate Son of God in the stately garment of the Greek Spirit. But until the present day no great genius has arisen in the missionary ranks in India with the capacity to interpret the truths of Christian revelation

in the language of India. During the last century there have been gifted Indians who were enthusiastic in their admiration for the Person and Teaching of Jesus, like the leaders of the Brahma-Samâj : Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen. But they all represent an artificial blending of Christian and Indian religious ideas ; perhaps, to put it more exactly, an attempt to unite " liberal " Christianity of the rationalistic type with the mystical philosophy of the Upanishads. Almost all of them, without exception, are unable to understand the inwardness of the mystery of Christian redemption. So their efforts resulted in an attempt to syncretise a somewhat emasculated Christianity with the wisdom of the Vedas, without clearing a path along which the vital and central truths of Christianity could penetrate the spiritual life of India.

But that which all these religious and able representatives of an eclectic religion—which attempted to combine Christianity and the Vedas—failed to achieve by conscious effort Sundar Singh succeeded in doing quite unconsciously. He is an Indian from head to foot, in no way influenced by the intellectual culture of the West. Yet he has taken his stand at the very heart of the Christian life, he lives entirely in " Biblical " Christianity. This is why he has been able to offer the pure unadulterated Gospel message to the Indians in an Indian form. In this respect lies the great significance of his personality and of his message for Christian Missions in India. No one has expressed this significance better than Nathan Söderblom :

" In the history of religion Sundar Singh is the first to show the world how the Good News of Jesus Christ in all its purity is reflected in the soul of an Indian. Sundar Singh himself is the reply to a question which exercised the minds of Christian and other thinkers, before India came into close contact with the thought-world of the West : ' What

will the Christianity of India be like, if indeed it ever becomes anything more than an offshoot from the West?' . . . Here is an Indian, who has remained Indian through and through, who yet has absorbed the essence of the Gospel into his being, and surrendered himself entirely to Christ. You will scarcely find anyone in the West who has steeped himself more thoroughly in the New Testament and in the Psalter than Sundar Singh. The striking thing about him is not the union of the Indian spirit with Christianity, but the way in which he intensifies and illuminates true Scriptural Christianity, from which we of the West could also learn much."

Sundar Singh is deeply convinced that Christianity will only achieve an entrance into Indian hearts and souls if it is offered to them in Indian form : " Indians greatly need the Water of Life, but they do not want it in European vessels." Yet only an Indian like the Sâdhu is capable of offering the Water of Life to the thirsty people of India in his own vessel. Even in appearance Sundar Singh is a living sermon to his fellow-countrymen. His saffron-coloured sacred robe is an Open Sesame to the homes of the people, while his self-denying wandering life of poverty and loneliness opens their hearts to him. Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâya says rightly : " Our missionary experience has gradually led us to the conviction that the Sannyâsi monk is the sole messenger to offer the mysteries of the Christian faith to the people of India." And Söderblom says very much the same thing : " If India is ever really to embrace Christianity, it must be offered to the Indians in a form which even outwardly, in its self-denial, freedom, and simplicity, meets the Indian ideal, and even surpasses it."

Yet it is not only Sundar Singh's external way of living which attracts the people of India, but his way of preaching also is comprehensible to them. He speaks in parables like Yâjñavalkya, like Buddha, and like Guru Nânak, and many of these parables are drawn

from the ancient Indian inheritance of the Vedas. Not only the form of his message is familiar to Indian ears, but to a great extent its content also. He talks about *Mâyâ*, the illusory deceitfulness of material things ; this world is a treacherous Fata Morgana which lures the tired wanderer onward with the promise of refreshing waters and then leaves him to die in the barren desert. He speaks about *Karma*, of the great all-prevailing moral law according to which every sinful act brings with it inevitable distress and punishment. Like the Buddha, he speaks of *trshṇa*, of that vital consuming thirst which the human soul desires to slake at all costs. Like all the wise men of India, he never tires of exhorting his hearers to *samâdhi*, to that silent, quiet brooding which gives the human heart power to enter into the knowledge of Divine truths ; and he speaks of *šânti*, of the deep peace of the soul, of whose worth all the sacred books of India are full. He proclaims *bhakti*, that holy love of God which sets the soul free from all this transitory world and leads it upwards into the realm of eternity ; and he praises *maitrî*, that wide, all-embracing love which reaches out to the whole creation ; and he preaches *moksha*, the redemption which is free and blessed and complete, in which the human soul finds rest in time and in eternity. Like Gautama Buddha, he speaks of *amṛta-dhâtu*, the "place where there is no more death." And he plunges joyfully into *prema-sâgara*, the immeasurable ocean of the Divine love. Then too, he contemplates *antaryâmin*, the "inner Guide," the God who has His throne in the inmost depths of the soul. And he glorifies *Bhagavân*, the supreme, the living Saviour-God, who takes up His abode in the soul of the righteous in order to fill it with salvation and life. Then, too, he sings of *îšvara-prasâda*, that wonderful saving act of grace which the

Redeemer works in the heart of a human creature entangled in the meshes of sin and sorrow. He speaks, too, of the mysterious *avatâra*, of the "descent," of the incarnation of the Saviour-God, who in humble earthly form comes to the children of men in order to redeem them out of the hand of the Evil One. As the Sâdhu utilises primitive Indian religious conceptions in his public addresses, so also he draws upon the ancient wisdom of the Yogis in his intimate conversations with the few. Like the Yogis of Brahmanism and Buddhism, he too possesses wonderful spiritual powers and spiritual knowledge, *ṛddhi* and *abhijñâ*; like them, he is able to detach his "astral body" (*manomaya-kâya*) from his earthly body and to ascend into the highest heaven (*brahma-loka*). He is endowed with the gift of heavenly sight and hearing (*divyaṃ cakshur* and *divyaṃ śrotraṃ*); like them, he has the gift of the discerning of spirits, the "understanding of strange hearts" (*paracitta-jñâna*), and the remembrance of a previous existence (*pûrva-nivâsâ-smṛti*), not indeed of previous earthly existences, but of an original spiritual contact between the soul and Christ.

When we listen attentively to the Sâdhu's message, both in public and in private, we catch distinct echoes of well-known leading ideas of the Indian religious system of salvation, both ancient and modern. And yet this Indian message is no other than the Good News preached by Paul and John, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, and Luther. It is the message of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the message of sin and grace, of the Cross and Atonement, the message of humility and prayer, of service and of brotherly love; it is, in short, a Biblical message, for the Book from which it takes its source is neither Veda, Gîtâ, nor Granth, but the New Testament. "The Bible, and especially the Gospel of

John, influences his thinking and his speech in a way which is astonishing in the case of a person so entirely Indian as he is." The Sâdhu knew the whole of the Bhagavadgîtâ by heart by the time he was seven years old, yet it is a striking fact that when he is preaching the Gospel he very rarely uses words or phrases from Indian religious literature ; both his thought and his language are steeped in the Bible.

This fact explains why Sundar Singh has rejected every essentially Indian conception of religion or of philosophy which conflicts with Christian ideals. Thus he has entirely given up the ancient Indian doctrine of the transmigration of souls, the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsâra*). In his opinion this doctrine is a "vain attempt to solve the problem of suffering." He confesses that even as a boy he did not like this idea, and that he longed for some place where there would be no more death. All the great souls of India have loathed this idea of rebirth, and have longed for the "place where death is not" (*amṛta-padaṃ*) ; but none of them has ventured on that account to question the doctrine of rebirth. The Sâdhu, however, like Râm Mohan Roy before him, under the influence of Biblical Christianity, entirely rejects the whole *saṃsâra* idea. This present life is the only time a man spends upon this earth ; it is the only period of preparation for Eternity, "for we shall never return to this life." The Sâdhu was only freed from that dogma which, for nearly three thousand years, has kept Indian thought in bondage, by the Christian idea of this life as the sole opportunity of deciding for Eternity.

Closely connected with the rebirth conception is that Indian pessimism which found its highest expression in the teaching of Buddha ; to renounce the idea of rebirth is to break completely with age-long pessimism

and to come out into the light and freedom of the day. In Buddhist pictures of the Wheel of Life a terrible dæmonic monster holds in his hands the scales upon which the twelve *nidâna*, the links of the Causal Chain, of the Causal Nexus, are portrayed—a vivid way of suggesting the close connection between pessimism and the doctrine of transmigration. Sundar Singh has no conception of a dark Fate which has power to rule the world or to affect the lives of men. Even the idea of the early Church, that this world lies groaning under the rule of Satan and of his hosts, scarcely affects his thinking. He is a childlike optimist, who sees the Love of his Heavenly Father everywhere. "I believe that everything is good." Everything in the world is in itself good, because it comes from the Creator who is pure Goodness ; but material things can harm souls, if men use them wrongly, apart from their Creator. The Sâdhu tries to show by a parable how it is that good and beautiful things can sometimes have a bad effect upon the hearts of men :

"There is in the Himalayas a certain kind of flower which by its scent lulls men into unconsciousness . . . in form and colour the flowers are beautiful ; everyone who sees them feels attracted to them, but no one walks near them, or sits down among them without being overtaken by mysterious and fatal slumber. At first I thought that the flowers were poisonous, but people assured me that this was not the case, for those who have been overcome by the scent do not die until the twelfth day, and then death ensues from hunger and thirst, and not from the immediate effect of the drug. In like manner the things of this world are not in themselves evil, but they stupefy careless souls, and hinder them from being conscious of spiritual hunger and thirst, and they drift into a sleep which may easily lead to spiritual death."

But the Sâdhu has had to throw over more than gloomy pessimism ; he has renounced the spirit of rigid asceticism, which indeed is nearly akin to it. There is hardly another country in the world in which

asceticism holds so high a place in the religious life as in India. The Vedas and Šâstras frequently acclaim the mysterious *tapas*, that marvellous inward "glow" achieved by self-chastisement. The Sannyâsis believe that they can kill within themselves all desire for the world by painful self-torture and thus escape the burden of the suffering of the world. This asceticism reached its zenith in the Jain Order. It is true that several religious men in India have recognised the uselessness of all external ascetic exercises, and they have not hesitated to say so plainly—Gautama Buddha and Guru Nânak have strongly condemned extreme asceticism—but they could not eliminate this ascetic tendency from Indian piety. Sundar Singh is not one whit behind the ascetics of his native land in readiness for suffering and self-denial ; but he does not suffer and deny himself in order to become holy, or to gain the power of working miracles, or in order to win salvation ; his sole aim is to bear witness to Christ's love and grace, and to share with his brethren something of the fullness of that peace and joy with which his heart is filled.

"I say to the Hindu Sâdhus: 'You become Sâdhus because you want to torture yourselves. I became a Sâdhu in order to serve; I do not torture myself, although I have often been tortured by others.' Indians forsake the world and deny themselves before they have discovered the fullness of God. They practise self-denial for its own sake, not because they have found peace, but because they want to win peace."

Sundar Singh rejects not only the external form of self-chastisement, but also their more subtle forms in Buddhism and Yoga. He does not believe that Buddha is right in demanding conscious extinction of desire from his followers. "Salvation does not consist in the annihilation of desire ; it is rather the satisfaction of desire. To overcome thirst we must not repress it—a process which can only lead to death—but we must

satisfy it." In like manner the Sâdhu also rejects that most subtle form of asceticism, the spiritual exercises of the Yoga, both as they are taught in Pantañjalis Yogasûtra and as they are recommended in Buddhist writings and in the Bhagavadgîtâ. In his own experience the Sâdhu found that all his own strivings after salvation were completely useless, and that man can only receive salvation as a free and unmerited gift of grace from the Hand of God. Deep peace of heart and the joys of heavenly ecstasy can never be worked up by any self-centred efforts, nor by our own strivings can we ever prepare the way for such experiences.

"I did not find much help in Yoga. It only assisted me up to a certain point. But as this help was not spiritual, it was useless. It used to astonish me that Jesus did not tell us to practise concentration, or to do spiritual exercises."

The Sâdhu knows one way only of attaining heavenly peace—that of humble prayer and quiet attention to the Voice of God in brooding contemplation. So deeply is his soul impregnated with the fundamental evangelical truth of *gratia sola* that he utterly rejects, as a hindrance to the attainment of salvation, the whole of the time-honoured psycho-technique of the Yoga.

Another tendency of Indian religion which the Sâdhu has avoided, from the standpoint of his Christian experience, is intellectualism. *Jñâna-mârga* ("the Way of Knowledge")—this is the way of salvation taught by the old Upanishads. Yâjñavalkya and the rest of the Brahman seers allude to a mysterious knowledge, the knowledge of the Unity of Âtman and Brahma. The highest wisdom of the Vedanta is something beyond the grasp of ordinary men, since it teaches the knowledge of *Mâyâ*, of the illusion of multiplicity, and of *advaita*, the non-dualism of the infinite Brahma. As in

few other races, the tendency towards metaphysical speculation is in the blood of India. Even Buddhism, which in its origin was a mighty reaction against all metaphysical philosophy, finally became entangled in its net, and produced a number of schools of speculative theology. The system of *bhakti*, too, with its stress on love to the Saviour-God, has given rise to a number of subtle speculative ideas. We find this speculative intellectual tendency again and again, even among great religious poets like Kabîr, Nânak, and Arjun, who sing the praises of their Saviour-God with overflowing devotion. It is most astonishing that the Sâdhu betrays no traces of this theological and speculative tendency ; we can only explain this phenomenon by the primitive purity of his evangelical faith. He carries out to its logical conclusion his ruling idea that " religion is a matter of the heart, and not of the head." The only thing that matters is to receive Christ's gift of grace in humble prayer and faith, and not to wonder and speculate about God and the world and redemption. The child who drinks the milk, according to the Sâdhu's beautiful parable, is wiser than the chemist who analyses it. To an Indian Sannyâsi who was preaching *jñâna-mârga* as the way of redemption the Sâdhu said that we want to drink water when we are thirsty, but that we do not need to know that it consists of oxygen and hydrogen.

" When a man is thirsty, whether he be learned or ignorant, young or old, in order to quench his thirst what he needs is not knowledge, but water. Before he drinks the water he does not need to know that it contains oxygen and hydrogen. If he refused to drink it until he could understand what we mean by oxygen and hydrogen he would die of thirst. From time immemorial men have quenched their thirst with water without knowing anything about its chemical constituents. In like manner we do not need to be instructed in all the mysteries of doctrine, but we do need to receive the Living Water which Jesus Christ will give us and which alone can satisfy our souls."

These words remind us involuntarily of one of Buddha's famous parables which he used to convince his disciple Mâlunkyaputta when he wanted to inquire into metaphysical questions. If a man were wounded by a poisoned arrow, and were to refuse to allow the surgeon to draw it out before he knew exactly how the arrow was made, and how the tip was poisoned, and all about the person who shot it, and where he came from, and what he looked like, the surgeon could do nothing for him, and the man would die. In like manner, a man who will not allow the arrow of harmful curiosity to be drawn out of his heart until he has found a philosophical solution for all the problems of God and the world is in the same case. Since Buddha's sole aim is to release the human soul from the burden of universal suffering, he refuses to be drawn into philosophical argument ; for the sake of the greater good of humanity he refuses to attempt to satisfy the intellectual hunger for truth. As decidedly as Buddha, Sundar Singh, from the standpoint of his personal evangelical experience, refuses to embark upon metaphysical speculation. Like Buddha also, he considers that the only thing that matters is not head-knowledge, but salvation, redemption, the peace of the soul—*šânti*. Philosophic thought is no help in the search for peace. In the course of many centuries it has not led mankind any deeper into the understanding of metaphysical problems. For this reason the Sâdhu regards the history of philosophy as an unprogressive cycle of thought.

" It must be admitted that philosophy has made no progress in the course of centuries. The same old problems repeat themselves, though in new forms and in fresh language. In India an ox with blindfolded eyes goes round an oil-press all the day long. When his eyes are unbandaged in the evening he finds that he has been going round and round

in a circle and that although he has succeeded in producing some oil he has got no further. Although the philosophers have been at it for hundreds of years, they have not reached their goal. Now and then, after much labour they have produced a little oil, which they have left behind them, but it is not sufficient to meet the sore need of mankind."

Not only has Sundar Singh freed himself entirely from intellectualism, but also from Indian pantheism. India is the classic land of pantheism. From the Bṛhad-Âraṇyaka-Upanishad of the Vedas down to the present day the siren-song has ever been sung that the All is One and that One is the All : Brahma ; also " I am Brahma " (*brahmâ 'smi*) ; " Thou thyself art Brahma " (*tat tvam asi*). Certainly it is only the strict Vedantists who defend the *Advaita* conceptions to their final philosophical conclusion. But the thought of the substantial unity of the soul and God, " consisting in a personal relationship with God, and based upon an attempt to prove the personality of God to the intellect through the sacred unity," continually reappears in the *bhakta*. The hymns of the Granth, with which the Sâdhu has been familiar from his youth, are specially full of pantheistic thoughts and expressions. He himself admits that during the early days of his Christian experience he was still deeply influenced by Hindu pantheism, and that he explained the wonderful peace which filled his soul by saying that he himself was God, or a part of God. But the more he steeped himself in the thought of the New Testament, the more these pantheistic tendencies receded into the background. To-day his rejection of the pantheism of his ancestral faith is as decided as it can be. Friedrich von Hügel, who had a conversation with him in London, expressed great astonishment at his entire freedom from pantheism. With wonderful directness, clearness, and accuracy the Sâdhu gives his reasons why there should

be complete separation between Christianity and pantheism :

1. " God is our Creator and we are His creatures ; He is our Father, and we are His children." 2. " If we ourselves were divine, we would no longer feel any desire to worship." 3. " If we want to rejoice in God we must be different from Him ; the tongue could taste no sweetness if there were no difference between it and that which it tastes." 4. " To be redeemed does not mean to be lost in or absorbed into God. We do not lose our personality in God ; rather we find it." 5. " Pantheism does not admit the fact of sin, therefore we often find immoral conduct among its followers."

But although the Sâdhu refuses to use the pantheistic formula of identification, " I am God," all the more does he love the expression, implying Divine Immanence, " God in us and we in Him," which indeed is a favourite formula in the Gospel of John. He brings out the difference between identification and immanence very clearly in several parables, the second of which is almost literally the same as one used by St. Teresa, and the third can be paralleled almost word for word in the writings of Origen, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Śankara.

" No one ought to imagine that the Presence of Christ and the sense of ' Heaven upon earth ' mean what a believer in pantheism means when he says : ' Now I am God.' No, we are in God and God is in us. But that does not mean that we are God or that He is man." " There is fire in the coal, and the coal is in the fire, but the coal is not the fire, and the fire is not the coal. We are only so far united with God as we give our hearts to Him and allow Him to baptise us with the Holy Spirit."

" Look at the sponge as it is immersed in the water. The sponge is in the water, and the water is in the sponge. But the sponge is not the water, nor the water the sponge, but both are different things. When we give time to prayer then we are in God, God is in us ; but that does not mean that God is our soul or that we are God." " Just as the water is in the sponge, so God is everywhere and in all things, but He is not identified with created things."

" Have you ever stood in a smithy ? Did you notice how the blacksmith held the iron in the fire ? It became more and more glowing

the longer it lay in the forge, until at last it looked quite like fire. The iron was in the fire, and the fire was in the iron, but the iron was not the fire, nor the fire the iron. When the iron began to glow, the smith could bend it into any shape he desired, but it still remained iron. Even so we still retain our personality when we allow ourselves to be penetrated by Christ."

Sundar Singh, then, regards the Christian's union with God, not as a *unio mystica substantialis*, but as a *unio mystica personalis*. No less important is the fact that he never separates union with God from the whole history of God's dealing with men.

"The Atonement achieved a union which was not there before. He is in us, and we are in Him; by this I do not mean that kind of union which Indians call 'losing oneself in God.' They talk of the stream which is swallowed up or lost in the ocean. We do not lose ourselves, but we attain life in union with Him."

Once more this complete freedom from pantheism is a clear sign of the strength and purity of that Scriptural Christianity represented by the Sâdhu. When pantheism disappears, the Hindu *avatâra* doctrine goes too. According to the Indian view the infinite Deity reveals Himself in countless ways; the Saviour-God is continually clothing Himself in fresh forms in order to reveal Himself to men and to show them the way of salvation. This *avatâra* doctrine makes it possible for Hinduism to combine the sublimest mysticism with the whole of popular polytheism. The countless divinities of the Indian Pantheon are regarded as incarnations of the one God; further, the gods of other races and the founders and saints of other religions in this way also obtain recognition. So mystical pantheism glides imperceptibly into vague syncretism. Sundar Singh's attitude towards this syncretism (which gives Jesus a place of honour in its ranks) is as unflinching and yet as modest in its exclusiveness as was that of early Christianity

towards the polytheism of the decadent civilisation of the ancient world. In his eyes Jesus Christ is the sole *avatâra*, the only incarnation of God. Even though these Hindu deities may have been dim foreshadowings of the Eternal Christ, only once in time has the Eternal Word taken earthly form. Once only has He been truly and fully man : in Jesus of Nazareth.

This doctrine of a single incarnation shows very clearly the great difference that exists between the Sâdhu's faith and that of many modern Hindus and Buddhists, who see in Jesus an *avatâra* of Krishna or Buddha.

"Krishna says: 'In every age I am born to save the good and to destroy the wicked.' Jesus, on the contrary, came to save sinners."

Again, the Sâdhu reveals the power of Christian thought in his strong condemnation of caste. In this respect he has had many predecessors in the history of Indian religion. Buddha, the Šâkya Prince, knew no caste in his message ; he saw only men who were in need of redemption ; in his community differences of caste did not count. Guru Nânak preached the equality of all men and the worthlessness of caste distinctions. Govind Singh tried to bridge over and remove caste differences in his *khâlsâ*. In more recent times it has been the leaders of the Brâhma-Sâmâj who, under the influence of Christianity, have taken up the cudgels against the tyranny of caste. But these efforts have been unsuccessful. So far, even Christian Missions have been unable to win a decided victory in this matter. To a large extent Christian converts are still influenced by their caste prejudices ; among Roman Catholic Indian Christians it sometimes happens that individual converts will refuse to attend Mass or receive the Sacrament if the officiating priest is a member of another

caste. Even the great Brahmabandhav was an enthusiastic defender of the caste system ; he spoke with great approval of some Christians in Madras and Bombay who refused to touch food which had been cooked by members of a lower caste. In the preservation of caste prejudice Sundar Singh sees one of the greatest weaknesses of the Christian Church in India, especially in South India. When we realise the gravity of this problem, we see all the more clearly how significant it is that the Sâdhu has broken entirely with caste, and that from the highest Christian standpoint he never tires of striving against this ancient social system of his native land, which has been in existence for more than two thousand years.

Thus we see that Sundar Singh has made a sweeping renunciation of all Indian conceptions and traditions which he could not harmonise with the spirit of New Testament Christianity. His message is not a compromise ; it is no synthesis of Indian and Christian religious thought, which has been the dream of so many Indian and Western minds. The Sâdhu does not believe that the Upanishads and the New Testament are of equal value, which is the point of view held by the followers of the Brâhma-Sâmâj, and, along another line, by a German philosopher and disciple of Schopenhauer, Paul Deussen.

His message is the pure Gospel of God's revealed love in Christ. It is only the language in which he clothes the old Gospel which is new and original ; this, however, is as genuine and pure as it is in the hands of the greatest Christian thinkers ; one might almost say that it is even more genuine and pure than that of many classical Christian mystics. For this reason Sundar Singh has the right to rank as an apostle of Christ, as an apostle of India. " He has a peculiar

influence for Christ in India, both among Christians and non-Christians," says his former teacher, Canon Wigram, a missionary who is somewhat inclined to be critical of Sundar Singh. Even the two most outstanding men of present-day India, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahâtma Gândhi, like and esteem the Sâdhu. This Christian apostle is regarded by some of his heathen fellow-countrymen as an actual *avatâra*, as an incarnation of their Saviour-God ; they even bestow upon him as upon Gândhi the divine title of Mahâtma (which, however, the Sâdhu, with true Christian humility, refuses to acknowledge). Even Indians who honour the Vedas and the Upanishads as the highest revelation of Divine Wisdom cannot escape the attraction of this Christ-filled soul.

Sundar Singh's significance for Christian Missions in India cannot be overestimated. Dr. Macnicol, who is both a scholar and a missionary, says : " He is India's ideal of the disciple of Christ—a barefooted itinerant preacher with burning love in his heart. In him Christianity and Hinduism seem to meet, and the Christian faith stands forth, not as something foreign, but like a flower which blossoms on an Indian stem." Yet it would be a great mistake to expect this wonderful Christian disciple to win a decided victory for Christianity over Hinduism. It was not only the apostolic preaching of the Gospel which won the Græco-Roman world for Christianity, nor was it only the brotherly love of the Christians nor the heroism of the martyrs, but it was the daring intellectual and spiritual labour of ancient Christian theologians, especially those of Alexandria. To conquer a world of thought like the Hellenistic world, theological speculation was needed in order to penetrate the Christian truths of revelation with the methods of ancient philosophy. In the same

way India needs not only the simple evangelical preaching of word and life (although this remains always the primal necessity), but, if it is to make a permanent conquest, it needs some massive theological achievement which will unite the fullness of the Christian revelation with the religious and philosophical heritage of India ; just as the Alexandrians and the Cappadocians, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, united it with the philosophy of the ancients. This means that a new *Summa Theologica* is needed, which will do for India what St. Thomas has done so magnificently for the West.

This theological synthesis is all the more important for India, though far more difficult than for the West, because the religious and philosophical treasures of India are far older and richer than those of Greece. Without this theological synthesis Christianity will never succeed in being for India what it once was for the Græco-Roman world. This does not mean that a syncretistic system like the Brâhma-Sâmâj is needed, which weaves together various external elements of Christianity and Hinduism ; rather, India needs a synthesis which will preserve in its purity the whole content of Christian revelation, while welcoming the great wealth of religious truth which is embodied in India's religion and philosophy, and which will assure it a right to exist in the intellectual life of Christianity. The Sâdhu can only achieve this synthesis in a very limited way, firstly, because he is pre-eminently a naïve humble Christian believer and not a theologian, and also because he cut himself off too early from Indian religious literature, and is therefore unable to penetrate into its breadth and depth. We must not overlook the fact that the knowledge of Indian philosophy and religion which the Sâdhu possessed at his conversion, as a lad of sixteen years, is too meagre to enable him

to make a complete intellectual analysis. But without such an analysis, and one which will probe into the farthest metaphysical recesses of the subject, the one religion cannot win a victory over the other. The courageous and enthusiastic witness of personal Christian experience, with all its emphasis upon peace of heart, will not suffice to cause a radical change in a religious and philosophical world like that of India. Only a theological genius can effect this, a person who is endowed with a wealth of literary knowledge, with philosophical acumen and theological method, and, above all, with the gift of a deep and humble personal faith. The Indian Vedânta had such a genius in Šankara, the Indian Bhakti in Râmânûja, Indian Buddhism in Nâgârjuna, Islâm in Al Ghazâlî, Greek Christianity in the Alexandrians and the Cappadocians, Western Christendom in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. And Indian Christianity cannot do without such a leader. Down to the present day no such leader has appeared. But that a desire for him already exists within Indian Christianity, and that earnest attempts at such a synthesis are being undertaken, is shown by the example of the Roman Catholic Sannyâsi, Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâya, to whom Friedrich von Hügel first drew our attention. Brahmabandhav was not content merely with the idea of founding an Order of contemplative and preaching Friars which should be purely Indian ; he had already begun to study the Christian truths of revelation in connection with the fundamental ideas of the Vedânta, and he was trying to bring these truths home to Indian thought by using the categories of the Vedânta.

" Indian thought can be made just as useful to Christianity as Greek thought has been to Europe." " The truths of the Hindu philosopher must be ' baptised ' and used as stepping-stones to the Catholic Faith."

"The European clothes of the Catholic religion should be laid aside as soon as possible. It must assume the Hindu garment which will make it acceptable to the people of India. This change can only be effected by Indian missionary Orders who preach the Sacred Faith in the language of the Vedânta."

Brahmabandhav was able to express very clearly the mysteries of the Trinity and of the Incarnation in the terminology of Indian philosophy. His attempt shows the capacity of the Indian mind to illuminate and give new emphasis to the fundamental truths of the Christian Faith, and particularly to those truths whose meaning has been to some extent neglected by Western theology. Brahmabandhav dared, too, to apply the ancient saying of Augustine, "*Novum testamentum in vetere latet, vetus testamentum in novo patet,*" to the relationship between the Vedas and the New Testament. At this point his thought is in harmony with that of Nathan Söderblom, who recently affirmed, as a guiding principle of missions, that in future there will be as many Old Testaments as there are Sacred Scriptures of the leading religions of the world.

Brahmabandhav, who was as deeply versed in the Theistic-Vedânta theology of Râmânûja as in the *Summa Theologica* of Aquinas, seemed marked out by special vocation as the first great Indian Christian theologian who would be able to achieve a creative synthesis between Hinduism and Christianity. His life-work, however, was ruined by the opposition of the Roman hierarchy. Narrow-minded fanatics not only condemned his ideas, but even forbade him to exercise any religious and theological activity. The result was that he threw himself more and more into the political side of the *Svarâj* Movement, and finally he became alienated from the Catholic Church which once he had so ardently loved. But even during his lifetime a strong Protestant like Dr. Fairbairn of Oxford

prophesied the victory of his ideas. "He (Fairbairn) was an aggressive Protestant, but justice compelled him to say that in spite of the fact that the present-day hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church was unwilling to allow such far-reaching concessions, it was nevertheless this Church alone, of all the existing bodies, which could use such broad-mindedness to her own advantage." Actually, Brahmabandhav's plans for a Hindu-Catholic Religious Order, and for a Christian theology founded on the Vedas, were again brought forward at a Congress of Indian Catholics in Madras in 1921 and approved. One of the most eminent representatives of Catholic missionary policy, Joseph Schmidlin, has undertaken in an enthusiastic treatise to defend the honour of this Indian thinker who, in his lifetime, was despised and branded as a heretic.

The life-work of Brahmabandhav is most instructive. It teaches us that the Christian message, if it is to win a permanent victory, needs a stronger and more conscious connection with the sacred literature of India than we find in the preaching of Sundar Singh. India has been given a wonderful evangelical genius in the Sâdhu, but she still needs a "Catholic" genius to bridge over the gulf between Christianity and Indian philosophy and theology. In the Sâdhu, India has a great apostle, but she needs a teacher as well, a *Doctor ecclesiae* as great as St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas. Were such a man granted her, then, and only then, would the victory of Christianity in the land of the Vedas be assured.

3. The Significance of Sundar Singh for Western Christianity

With Sundar Singh a new epoch begins for Christian Missions in India. He lives and preaches the Gospel of Christ in true Indian terms and appeals to the heart

of India. "On young and old," says his teacher, the Presbyterian missionary Dr. Fife, "upon Christians and upon non-Christians, he exerts an influence which was never greater than it is now. There are a great number of true Christian men in North India, but Sundar Singh occupies a peculiar position. There is only *one* Sundar Singh." In the whole history of Christian Missions there are few to whom such a far-reaching sphere of activity has been granted. But is the significance of the Sâdhu exhausted with his proclamation of the Gospel in India and in the neighbouring countries? When he travelled through the lands of the West, had he a message for them also? Many Western Christians, including eminent theologians, have regretted that the Sâdhu ever left his native land and came to Europe and America. But they are mistaken; his preaching was no less useful to Western Christianity than it is to Hindus and Buddhists. His personality and his message constitute the most apt and searching criticism of those errors and superficialities which are so evident in the Christianity of the West; indeed, I would go further, and say that they are a fresh and powerful reminder of the central facts of Christianity, of the "one thing needful," an insistent call to the conscience of Christendom to face the supreme challenge of Christianity.

The whole history of Western Christianity presents the spectacle of an ever-renewed drift away from the centre, a continual flight to the circumference. Again and again the Christianity of the West has lost itself in externals, in dogmatic formulas, in ecclesiastical organisation, in theological dialectic, in undue stress on intellectual culture. Again and again it has mistaken the rind for the kernel, the rays of sunshine for the light itself. The West has not lacked holy men who

by life and word have called Christendom back to the Living Christ, whose message has been a perpetual summons to repentance. But the present day is not rich in such saints who can show Christians the way back to communion with Christ. There are indeed many learned and able theologians, astute Churchmen and social reformers, but there are very few men of God to whom "Christ is all in all," who therefore can be all in all to their brethren. In the Christian Sâdhu, Western Christianity sees such a man of God. That which so many Western Christians regard as belonging to the region of mediæval legend now appears before their eyes as a living reality. In Sundar Singh the West beholds a man who lives entirely in the supernatural world, one who brings a message from that world, a man whose heart is fixed in Eternity, and whose word and life are a sermon of the Living Christ. He stands before Western Christianity like a loud *Sursum corda!* as one who summons and leads it to that higher world whose reality is becoming fainter and fainter and which threatens to fade into oblivion.

To a large extent contemporary Christendom has lost the secret of that *vita spiritualis* which was an obvious necessity in previous ages. Somewhat in the manner of ancient Indian psychology, Sundar Singh speaks of the "sixth sense," "of that inward spiritual sense by which we perceive the Presence of God in our lives, just as we perceive external things of this world through the medium of the five senses of the body." In Western lands this sense of transcendental reality has been stunted, and in some instances it has been almost starved out of existence.

"The men of the West are highly educated in science and philosophy, but they understand nothing of spiritual things." "People are anxious to explore every other region of truth save that which concerns their

spiritual condition. They are eager to know when there will be an eclipse of the sun, or of the moon, or what accounts for the spots on the sun. They even try to explore the depths of the clouds, but they do not trouble themselves about the clouds of sin in their souls."

It is not only a highly developed intellectual activity that has led many Christians to lose all touch with transcendental reality—in simpler language, to have forgotten how to pray—rationalistic philosophical and theological ideas must also bear part of the blame. While religious "heathen" of the East cultivate the "spiritual life" as a matter of course day by day and hour by hour, in the practice of meditation, contemplation, and prayer, many Western Christians have thrown overboard the *exercitium spirituale* as so much useless ballast. Indeed, there are to-day Protestant theologians who have given up the whole of the inner life of prayer and meditation as a "mass of error," and who try to cover up the awful nakedness of modern Christianity with the fig-leaves of theological justification. "We are tending," says Evelyn Underhill, "more and more to develop a typically Western kind of Christianity, marked by the Western emphasis on doing and Western contempt for being; and if we go sufficiently far on this path we shall find ourselves cut off from our source." [1] Sundar Singh sees very clearly that the root cause of the externalism, poverty, and weakness of Western Christianity lies in the lack of a deep life of prayer. A Swiss pastor says of him: "With wise simplicity he has made the diagnosis of our disease." He complained frequently: "You Europeans are in too great a hurry; you have no time to pray or to live!" Very aptly he has summed up the meaning of this neglect of the life of prayer in the West: "People who do not live in fellowship with

[1] *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day*, p. 163.

God in prayer are not worthy of being called human beings ; they are trained animals." "A Christian without prayer is a corpse." For this reason all his addresses in the West were a great call to "*Pray without ceasing.*" When some Swiss pastors asked him what they should do to make their work more successful, he answered simply : "*More prayer.*" "In this respect," writes Söderblom in a striking passage, "Sundar Singh has something to teach the West. But this lesson does not come from India, but from the Gospel. The widespread, ever-increasing activity of Western Christendom cannot make up for the weakness of its inner life."

In the Sâdhu's opinion, it is because so many Western Christians have lost the art of prayer that they have lost their hold on the central Christian truth of the Deity of Christ. Again and again he pleads earnestly with those who only see in Christ a prophet and an ethical Teacher, a figure in history, but not the Living Saviour and the Source of all life. He warns the Western Church against sending out people with such views as missionaries to India. "Those who deny the Deity of Christ bring with them poison instead of spiritual nourishment." In his spirited defence of the Deity of our Lord, Sundar Singh has a further message for Western Christianity. His emphasis on this central doctrine of Christianity suggests a solution to many minds which are struggling with the problems of modern Biblical criticism and Comparative Religion. Sundar Singh's faith in Christ does not rest in the first place upon the Jesus of History, but upon the Eternal Christ, with whom he lives in personal fellowship through prayer. Only from this standpoint does he contemplate the Figure of Jesus as he sees It in the Gospels. In this direction he is poles apart from all

scientific and religious Historical realism, and still farther from the " Myth-theory " which attracts so many Christian teachers of Dogmatic Theology. To pass from faith in the Eternal Christ to faith in the Historical Jesus is the only possible way of approach for those whose faith has been disturbed or hindered by the opposite method of Biblical criticism and historical research into the Life of Christ. This way is independent of all the " results " of scientific research, and yet it can be combined with them. Once a man has seen the reality of the Eternal Christ who " became flesh and dwelt amongst us," he will find that problems of eschatology or of the Messianic Consciousness of the Historical Jesus simply do not touch either his faith in Christ or his love to Christ. The " proof " of the Deity of Christ does not lie first of all in the New Testament documents, which, after many decades of honest research, to some extent have become somewhat problematic, but in faith in Christ, and in the possession of Christ in the Church, and in the soul of the individual Christian.

Sundar Singh has come to believe in the Divine Humanity of Christ through his own personal experience, through immediate contact with the Living Christ. Augustine is the classical witness to the other method when he says that the foundation of his personal faith in Christ is the consciousness of the whole Church, the corporate judgment of the *orbis terrarum—ego vero evangelio non crederem, nisi me commoveret catholicae ecclesiae auctoritas*. Both conceptions meet in this : that they are founded upon the Ever-Living Christ ; the one upon the Christ who reveals Himself to the individual soul, the other upon the Christ who is the Life-Principle of a great organic Society. The Sâdhu has done a great service to Western theologians, and,

indeed, to all Christians, in so far as he has turned their attention away from historical research to the living Presence of the Incarnate Son of God. He opens the eyes of both parties (of those who defend rationalist orthodoxy and of those who stand for rationalist liberalism) to the mystery of the Deity of Christ, which is most clearly expressed in the words of the Athanasian symbol : "*Perfectus Deus, perfectus homo.*"

Since the Sâdhu's message brings home to Western Christendom a renewed sense of the reality of the life of prayer and of faith in the Living Christ, it carries with it an urgent sense of the reality of the eternal world. Later Protestantism especially has lost that immense and grave sense of eternity which was characteristic of mediæval and reformed Christianity, and has turned a religion, originally deeply imbued with the supernatural element, into an ethical system. On the other hand, to ancient Christendom the Kingdom of God meant something which pointed forward to a great Divine ideal, unrealised upon earth, which the mystic sacramental Body of the Church only anticipated, but for which it was no substitute. Modern Protestantism, however, has tended more and more to conceive of the Kingdom of God as exclusively concerned, here and now, with social and ethical problems. Thus, that Kingdom which in the thought of the early Christians could not be built up by human effort came to mean an order of society which could only be evolved out of the inner consciousness of mankind. This sort of optimism has produced a terrible reaction in the theology of the Barth-Gogarten School, which stresses the ideas of Transcendence and Judgment to such an extent that man is driven into perpetual "crisis" and despair, and has to take his "place in the air."[1] Sundar Singh

[1] *Römerbrief.* Karl Barth.

shows us the true belief in the supernatural world, which has as little to do with this negative eschatology as it has with the worldly faith of liberalism. He shows us how Christians should live even now in this transitory world. The heart of the Christian faith is the resolute affirmation of transcendental reality, the unceasing surrender to the supernatural, but a surrender in joy and thankfulness, in confident assurance of salvation.

Sundar Singh reveals this Christian "other-worldliness" most clearly in his apostolic life of poverty (24) and chastity. In the Protestant world he has renewed the honour of the *consilia evangelica* which the Reformers had abandoned—as a justifiable protest against the over-emphasis and error of the monastic system. The complete surrender of the monastic ideal, however, and its logical consequence—an exaggerated idea of the importance of "life in the world" as a vocation—has borne bitter fruit. Schopenhauer spoke truly when he said that this surrender meant the "dethronement of the supernatural." The Forerunner of the Lord (John the Baptist) and Christ Himself, Paul (the great Apostle of the Gentiles), and many great men of God, Origen and Augustine, Benedict and Francis, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura, have embodied before the world the monastic ideals of poverty and celibacy. Christianity can as ill afford to dispense with this ideal of life on the one side as it can afford to give up the ideal of vocation in the world, and marriage, on the other. That Sundar Singh, the preaching Friar, has been so warmly welcomed in Europe and in America is a clear sign that people have begun to modify the Reformers' conception of monasticism and to value the *consilia evangelica*.

Sundar Singh's "other-worldliness" comes out very

plainly in his belief in miracles. The Sâdhu teaches us the golden mean between a superstitious hankering after the miraculous and a rationalistic desire to do without it altogether. He has himself experienced many a wonderful deliverance in his varied life, and in these happenings he sees a proof of the activity of the Living Christ. But for him all these external miraculous events are only outward signs and reflections of the great central miracle : that of the forgiveness of sins and the spiritual new birth. He who believes in this inward miracle believes also in the historical miracle of the Incarnation and the Atonement, and he who believes in this miracle in the soul of man and in history finds nothing impossible in external miracle ; to him it is only the inevitable radiance streaming out from the great miracle of redemption. For the activity of the Living God cannot be confined to the sphere of history and of the spiritual life ; it must necessarily include the physical life of man and the external laws of Nature. Such a view involves no breaking of the laws of Nature, but a sublime sense of order, which, indeed, is not visible to the profane gaze, for it can only be perceived by the spiritually-minded man whose vision has been cleansed and intensified by the steady practice of prayer. Although from the historical standpoint isolated examples of miraculous events in the Sâdhu's life may have to be criticised, his religious conception of miracle is genuinely Christian, as Friedrich von Hügel has said in a recent strong defence of the Sâdhu, and Sundar Singh, in his simplicity, has expressed this far more clearly and impressively than many Western theologians.

Further, Sundar Singh has a special mission to Christian theology and to the Christian Church of the West. Theological research needs to be constantly balanced by living Christian piety if it is not to degenerate

into presumptuous speculation, destructive criticism, or empty dialectic. Theology without prayerful piety is like a fountain whose waters have dried up. In this lay the greatness of the outstanding Christian theologians of the past, that they were neither mere speculative philosophers nor mere learned scholars, but religious men, who were in living contact with God, and who therefore had something to say and to declare about God, as is implied in the word θεόλογος. Their theology had a strength and a driving power quite different from the learning which often goes by this name to-day. Their great theological ideas came to them while they were on their knees before God in prayer, as they waited on Him for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Sâdhu's personality points us once more towards this kind of theology, which to-day has so largely been lost. From a simple man of God like Sundar Singh the learned in the divinity of the West can learn what religion and Christianity are in their essence. A Swiss pastor spoke truly when he said : " The Sâdhu is worth more than all of us who have been trained in theology ; we would be sinning against the truth if we were to refuse to admit this." When a Western theologian begins to study a man so richly gifted with the Grace of God as Sundar Singh, he finds his conscience strangely stirred. A Swiss pastor, Kiener of Thierachern, speaks thus of his meeting with Sundar Singh in Edinburgh :

" As I saw him there, standing before me, and heard him speak of his spiritual life, while on the other hand I knew that I was surrounded by theological scholars in gown and hood, all at once the question arose in my mind : What are we aiming at, after all, in studying theology ? Why do we learn and study all the hundreds of lesser things, when we do not allow the most important one of all to have its proper place in our lives ? What are we doing with all our apparatus of scholarship, and what have we achieved by it all ? Men like this Indian can move nations. But what do *we* achieve ? "

The Sâdhu is not only a critic of our theology by the fact of his vital Christian personality, but while he was in Europe he gave his views upon this subject with unreserved frankness and unsparing severity.

"I never send anyone to the theologians, for too often they have lost their sense of spiritual reality. They can explain Greek words, and that sort of thing, but they spend their time among their books and are not enough with the Lord. I do not condemn scientific theology and theologians wholesale; many of them are saints. But unfortunately it is the fashion of the day to doubt and deny everything, to criticise our Lord, to discuss His Deity, etc. I protest against this tendency." "You are in danger of going wrong. If you want spiritual guidance, do not turn to Rationalists or theologians who are inwardly empty, but go to the Word of God, and you will find strength at the Master's Feet." "Real theological studies are made at the Feet of Jesus Christ. I would like to say a word here about theological colleges in order that you may not misunderstand me. I am not speaking without reflection. I have known young people who by the time they were to leave college and begin their work for Christ had lost their enthusiasm. I asked them what had happened. One of them answered in the name of them all: 'The insects of criticism and unbelief have eaten up our souls.' This is why I feel I must speak; my love for my Saviour forces me to it. I myself wished to study, but the whole question is a difficult problem; for if life has been stifled there is nothing left. I learnt many good things at College which concerned this earthly life, but the teaching of the Holy Spirit I have received at the Feet of the Master. It is not that I am opposed to all education, but education without life is certainly dangerous. Only when head and heart work together harmoniously will there be great results for the Glory of God."

The Sâdhu is particularly opposed to Biblical criticism, which he regards as a kind of spiritual "influenza." "Many cultivated people have time enough to study books about the Word of God, but they have no time to read it for itself, or, if they do read it, they criticise it instead of trying to learn something from it. This Word possesses the power to show us our faults, but we find fault with it and are always on the look-out for mistakes. Thus we turn a blessing into a curse. It is no wonder that such people cannot understand what Christ means."

In recent years rarely has any religious man passed so severe a judgment on present-day theology as Sundar Singh. Some of this criticism is certainly one-sided; we cannot expect the Sâdhu to take a complete view of

the whole complicated problem of our theology. He fails to appreciate the honest and courageous love of truth which characterises modern critical theology, a veracity which in no way only springs from Rationalism, but from the Christian ethic; neither does he realise that this critical theology has made available to all great historical knowledge of direct religious value, and whose full religious significance will perhaps only become plain to later generations. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that the Sâdhu's criticism is, in its essence, sound. To some extent modern theology is divorced from the life of personal religion. That is the reason why it starts with false presuppositions and erects false standards; that is why in its hands criticism becomes a deadly weapon instead of a useful instrument. The danger does not lie in the method of criticism, but in its one-sided use, in the absence of that healthy balance which is supplied by contact with the religious life. "*Ὅμοιον ὁμοίῳ γιγνώσκεται.*" The atmosphere in which the whole of the Scriptures and of the Patristic writings arose is the same as that in which the Sâdhu lives: prayer, belief in miracle, heroism—to sum up, it is "life in heaven." Historical research which is not steeped in this atmosphere lacks the essential mental equipment for understanding the object of its study; it can only sketch a caricature of Hebrew and Early Christian history. And a systematic theology which starts from a quite different view of the world will always give a wrong twist to its descriptions of the essence of Christianity and of its fundamental truths. Sundar Singh has laid his finger upon the weakest spot in modern theology. His criticism is painful, but it points us back to that kind of theology which the great *Doctores ecclesiae* and the Reformers taught, a theology learnt "at the Master's Feet."

The Western Church, as well as Western theology, can learn much from this Indian Christian disciple. His whole life and activity enforce one of his ruling ideas : ecclesiasticism and Christianity are not the same thing. It is true that in his complete independence of the visible Church there is a one-sidedness which cannot be considered normal for the ordinary Christian life ; but, on the other hand, it is striking to see how a Christian disciple, without any closer connection with institutional religion, solely on the strength of his free intercourse with Christ, is able to achieve the greatest and most wonderful things. The Sâdhu's example warns us very forcibly against all overestimation of ecclesiastical institutions and organisations. He himself once said to the Archbishop of Upsala :

" I value order and principle, but not too much organisation. I do not believe in the organisation which you have in the West. Here you even plan a programme for God Himself in order to show Him how He ought to guide the affairs of the world and of the Church." And to Pastor Lauterburg of Switzerland he said : " Churchianity is not Christianity. God is a God of Order, but the order must agree with the leading of the Holy Spirit ; otherwise it will be useless."

The salvation of the Church does not lie in organisation, nor in the assiduous cultivation of Church fellowship. The Sâdhu himself discovered on his missionary journeys through the West that belonging to a Church and holding a correct attitude towards dogma in no way always coincided with living fellowship with Christ.

" There are many in the Christian Church who know a great deal about Christ, yet inwardly they are dried up ; Christ does not live in their hearts." " To many Western Christians Christ would say : ' I have a place in your churches, but I have no place in your hearts ; you offer Me an outward service in a church because you have never lived with Me.' "

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUNDAR SINGH

Sundar Singh's personality and his message have also peculiar significance for the unity of the Christian Churches, towards which most Christian bodies are striving to-day. Were Sundar Singh's pure devotion to Christ alive in all Christian hearts, then the external way to unity would be open, and indeed to a unity in faith. To the divided and conflicting Protestant Churches, communions and sects, Sundar Singh is a perpetual exhortation to unity and an example of brotherly love ; to the Roman Church, on the other hand, Sundar Singh is able to show that the unity of the whole of Christendom is not to be attained along the path of uniformity and organisation, but solely through communion with Christ.

"It is a great pity that many Roman Catholics care more about the Church than about Christ, who is the Head of the Church. They prize the shell but neglect the kernel, they defend the Church but not the Head Himself."

Sundar Singh's life and activity contradict the statement of the Roman Catholic catechism that it is only the Roman Church which produces saints, whereas the other Christian communions "can show no saints whose reality has been sealed by the mark of the Divine approval through miracles." The Sâdhu belongs to Evangelical Christianity. In his individualistic spiritual attitude, and in his refusal to acknowledge any ecclesiastical authority, he is a thorough Protestant. And yet this Protestant embodies very wonderfully the Catholic ideal of perfection ; indeed, one may say more than this : "In his lifetime he seems (as Söderblom says frankly) to fulfil the four classic conditions for canonisation. Millions of men venerate him as a revelation of purity and goodness which is more than human. He is an outstanding example of Christian love and

humility. Miracles are connected with him, although he himself lays no special stress on the miraculous element in his narratives, but rather by miracles he means the experience of God's close Presence in mercy and in power in poor human hearts. He exhibits also that continual joy which Benedict XIV added to the conditions of canonisation. To no one now living could all these conditions apply more fully than to this simple Evangelical in the saffron robe of an Indian ascetic."

In fact, many Roman Catholic theologians have paid a tribute of recognition and of admiration to the Sâdhu. A French theologian, indeed, writing under the name of "Cécile Garons," has written most enthusiastically about Sundar Singh as a "second St. Paul." He sees in him the mark of the Divine approval, in that he has begun "to reform the Reformation" by "bringing back into Protestantism the mystical and supernatural life," thus preparing the way for reunion with Rome—"a Pope could not speak otherwise."

"Will Sundar Singh one day become a Catholic? God alone knows. But I know very well that on the day he became a Catholic he would lose all influence over Protestants. They would no longer listen to him, and he would be called a visionary and a fanatic. I believe that he is a St. Paul, sent to the Gentiles of heresy; he is preparing the way, whether the time be near or distant, for the general return of Protestants to the one Fold."

That which the Sâdhu has to show to Western Christendom is the lost treasure hid in the field, the precious pearl, the Gospel of Christ in its simplicity, greatness, and power. So many Western Christians do not find this treasure; others look at it but fail to recognise its worth and throw it away. On one occasion the Sâdhu said to some Western Christians:

"You are like a man who had a diamond, and did not know how valuable it was. He thought it was just an ordinary jewel, so he sold

it without further ado to the first man who offered him a few rupees. Later on he learnt that it was a diamond, worth a hundred thousand rupees, and he lamented bitterly in these words: 'It was a diamond, and I thought it was only an ordinary precious stone! What a fool I have been to sell it!' He tried to find the man to whom he had sold it, but it was then too late."

So many Western Christians have lost all sense of the wonder of the Gospel. Worldliness and scepticism, rationalism and dogmatism, have clouded their vision. Sundar Singh, the Christian disciple of the East, has a rare power, such as few possess, to open their eyes. Those who follow the course of his life and listen to his message find that the Gospel can bring to a restless heart the peace of Christ, "Heaven upon earth."

* * * * *

The veteran Presbyterian missionary, Dr. Wherry, who has known the Sâdhu from his childhood and has followed his development for twenty years, calls him "the most wonderful evangelist of this century," "the greatest outstanding personality of the Church of the present day." Some people may consider this an extravagant judgment, but it is undeniable that Sundar Singh is an evangelist both to the East and to the West. He has, in fact, a double message: for India, that in spite of much precious wealth she has not yet found the pearl of great price, the Gospel pearl; and for the Christian West, that she indeed possesses this precious pearl, but that it has been almost lost amidst the heap of accumulations made by theology, Church, and culture. The Sâdhu is a true herald of this message, since he not only proclaims it but lives it out in his life. Humanity needs such prophets. Once when an English clergyman asked Mahâtma Gândhi how Christianity could become a power in India, the latter gave as the first requirement: "All you missionaries and Christians alike must begin

to live as Christ lived." In a similar vein Rabindranath Tagore wrote to a young English clergyman who was hoping to become a missionary in India : " The aim of every Christian should be to become like Christ . . . you cannot preach Christ until you have begun to be like Christ yourself ; and then you will not preach Christianity, but the Love of God which He reveals." That which the two greatest men of present-day India regard as the ideal for Christian Missions is the life-ideal of Sundar Singh, an ideal which he has translated into practice. In a sermon in Switzerland he said : " When Christians are like their Lord, then they witness to Him in their lives before others." And to the Archbishop of Upsala he said :

" We Indians do not want a doctrine, not even a religious doctrine, we have enough and more than enough of that kind of thing ; we are tired of doctrines. We need the Living Christ. India wants people who will not only preach and teach, but workers whose whole life and temper is a revelation of Jesus Christ."

These words of the Sâdhu's apply not only to India, but to the West. In these words he expresses what he is himself, and what he desires to be—a follower of Jesus Christ. As such he summons us and all Christians, in the words of Paul :

" Be ye imitators of me as I also am of Christ."

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NOTES

[1] Cf. Streeter, p. 42.

[2] *Sâdhu Sundar Singh*, Mrs. Parker, p. 151.

[3] *Ancestral faith.* For material for the above the author is mainly indebted to the following books:

M. A. Macauliffe: *The Sikh Religion: its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors.* 6 vols., Oxford, 1900. (Complete Collection of the Sikh Religious Documents.) Ernst Trumpp: *The Adhi Granth, or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs.* Trans. from the original Gurmukhi, with Introductory Essays. London, 1877. J. D. Cunningham: *A History of the Sikhs.* London, 1848 (reprinted 1918). Khazan Singh: *Philosophical History of Sikh Religion*, 2 vols., Lahore, 1914. Rup Singh: *Sikhism, a Universal Religion.* Amritsar, 1911. Miss Field: *The Religion of the Sikhs.* London, 1914. Rose: *Sikhs*, E.R.E., xl. 508 ff. Främmande: *Religionsurkunder, utg. N. Söderblom*, 1908, 11. 678 ff. Bloomfield: *The Sikh Religion: Studies in the History of Religions*, presented to C. H. Toy, 1912, 169 ff. Oltramare: *La Religion des Sikhs.* RHR 63 (1911), 53 ff. Cabaton: "Les Sikhs de L'Inde et le Sikhisme," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1908, 681 ff. Vinson: "La Religion des Sikhs," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1909, 631 ff. Estlin Carpenter: "The Sikh Religion," *Hibbert Journal*, 1911–12, 201 ff. *Id.*, *Theism in Mediæval India.* London, 1921, 470 ff. John Campbell Oman: *Cults, Customs, and Superstitions of India.* London, 1908, 83 ff. Teja Singh: *Die Sikhbewegung in Indien und ihr Verhältnis zum freien Christentum.* 5 Weltkongress für freies Christentum, Protokoll, 1910, 722 ff. H. v. Glasenapp: *Die Sikhs Ihr Staat und ihr Glaube "Der Neue Orient" Halbmonatsschrift für das politische, wirtschaftliche, und geistige Leben des gesamten Ostens.* Berlin, 1920, 403 ff. C. Clemen: *Die nichtchristlichen Kulturreligionen.* Leipzig, 1921, 11. 20 ff.

[4] Cf. Streeter, pp. 2 ff.

[5] The following account of Sundar Singh's conversion is taken literally from his own narrative; it is founded mainly upon the testimony he gave in a sermon at Tavannes (Switzerland) on the 1st of March, 1922. Cf. Streeter, pp. 5–7.

[6] Cf. J. C. Winslow, *Nârayan Vaman Tilak, the Christian Poet of Mâhârâshtra*, Calcutta, 1923; Charles C. Monahan, *Theophilus Subramanyan Theophilus Subramanyan*, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, London.

[7] According to the census of 1909 there were in India 2,755,900 Sâdhus. See H. V. Glasenapp, *Der Hinduismus, Gesellschaft und Religion im heutigen Indien.* Münich, 1922.

[8] See F. J. Western, "Hindu and Christian Sâdhuism." *International Review of Missions*, 10. 1920. Animânanda Brahmachâri, *Svâmi Brahmabandhav Upâdhyâya*, Calcutta, 1908.

[9] To-day there are quite a number of Christian Sâdhus. Mr. Redman writes: "From time to time I have met other Christians who were living as Sâdhus. But none of them made a lasting impression upon my mind, save perhaps Padre Karak Singh, who lived and worked many years ago in the Punjab.

[10] Streeter, p. 11.

[11] Streeter, pp. 24 ff. Cf. with Gandhi's statement: "For me nothing is so purifying as a fast. . . . A fast which is undertaken with the object of giving expression to one's inmost self, and in order that the spirit may master the body, is a powerful element in the development of personality."

[12] Cf. Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la Mission du Thibet.* Lille, Paris. R. E. Huc, *Le Christianisme en Chine, en Tartarie et un Thibet.* Paris, 1857, ii. Herrmann auf der Heide, *Missionsgeschichte Chinas u. seiner Nebenländen, Tibet, Mongolei und Mandschureich.* Steyl, 1897, 98 ff.

[13] Streeter, p. 44.

[14] "Sayings of Sundar Singh while in Switzerland" (*The Lausanne and Neuchâtel Magazine*, 1922): "Gandhi and Tagore would have become Christians if they had not visited Europe."

[15] In autumn 1925 he nearly lost the sight of one eye through trachoma; he also suffers much from heart trouble. In December 1925 he was dangerously ill, and for a time his life was despaired of. Unable to do evangelistic work, the Sâdhu has occupied himself with writing two valuable little books, *Meditations* and *Visions*, and in this way he is passing on to his friends in India and all over the world the message which has come to him.

[16] Streeter, p. 100.

[17] Streeter, pp. 18, 93–94.

[18] Cf. Streeter, pp. 109–156.

[19] Streeter, pp. 69 ff.

[20] Cf. Streeter, pp. 74 ff.

[21] Cf. Streeter, pp. 128 ff.

[22] Streeter, pp. 204 ff.

[23] Cf. Streeter, pp. 196 ff.

[24] After the death of his father (1923) the Sâdhu gave up the homeless life of absolute poverty which he had lived for eighteen years. With the money which his father left him he bought an old house, in accordance with his father's express desire. One of Sundar Singh's friends, Dr. Peoples (a medical man), settled down in the house with his family and looked after the Sadhu, who was in bad health. In 1925 Sundar Singh bought another mission house, where he is now staying with his friend's family. In his will he has given instructions for this house to be used for missionary work in the Himalayas.

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